The Foreign Policy Centre

The Foreign Policy Centre is an independent think-tank launched by Prime Minister Tony Blair (Patron) and former Foreign Secretary Robin Cook (President) to revitalise debates on global issues. The Centre has developed a distinctive research agenda that explores the strategic solutions needed to tackle issues which cut across borders – focusing on the legitimacy as well as the effectiveness of policy.

The Foreign Policy Centre has produced a range of **Publications** by key thinkers on world order, the role of non-state actors in policymaking, the future of Europe, international security and identity. These include: *The Post-Modern State and the World Order* by Robert Cooper, *Network Europe* and *Public Diplomacy* by Mark Leonard, *NGOs Rights and Responsibilities* by Michael Edwards, *After Multiculturalism* by Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, *Trading Identities* by Wally Olins and *Third Generation Corporate Citizenship* by Simon Zadek.

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About the editors

Phoebe Griffith is a researcher at The Foreign Policy Centre. She is co-ordinator of the Global Britons programme and co-author of *'Migration, Integration and Citizenship: Lessons from around the World'* (The Foreign Policy Centre, Working Paper, February 2002).

Mark Leonard is Director of The Foreign Policy Centre. His work on *'Rebranding Britain'* for the think-tank Demos led to an international debate on branding countries and inspired the Foreign Secretary to launch Panel 2000, a taskforce to advise him on promoting Britain abroad. He has acted as a consultant on identity for foreign governments and private companies.

About the Global Britons Programme

This collection forms part of the Global Britons Programme, a year-long research project which intends to revisit notions of Britishness in the context of debates about devolution, asylum, Europe and Britain's role in the world.

The programme builds on the success of The Foreign Policy Centre pamphlet, *After Multiculturalism* by Yasmin Alibhai-Brown – a powerful critique of the failings of traditional multicultural policies.

The Global Britons Decision Makers Forums – a UK-wide roadshow – form the backbone of the programme and will be the basis of a major report by Yasmin Alibhai-Brown which will be published in 2003. The forums bring together practitioners to discuss how diversity can be looked at in practical terms.

The programme is made up of several strands, including Refugees and Integration; Education and Global Citizenship; and News in a Global Age. For more information about the programme please contact: globalbritons@fpc.org.uk.

About our partners
The British Council works in 218 towns and cities in 109 countries. Its purpose is to win recognition abroad for the UK's values, ideas and achievements, and to nurture lasting, mutually beneficial relationships with other countries. Its work includes teaching English; running information centres; promoting British education and training; working closely with governments and NGOs on reform and good governance and demonstrating the innovation, creativity and excellence of British science, arts, literature and design. For more information please visit www.britishcouncil.org.

The Development Education Association (DEA) is the umbrella body for promoting global and international development issues in education. For further information please contact dea@dea.org.uk or call 0207 490 8108.

Reclaiming Britishness

Edited by
Phoebe Griffith and Mark Leonard

The Foreign Policy Centre

Reclaiming Britishness

The Contributors

Yasmin Alibhai-Brown is a Senior Researcher at The Foreign Policy Centre. She has a weekly column in *The Independent*.

David Blunkett is Home Secretary of Great Britain.

Sacha Chan-Kam is a Senior Reintegration Assistant at the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

Matthew D'Ancona is Deputy Editor of *The Sunday Telegraph*.

Philip Dodd is Director of the Institute of Contemporary Arts. He has published two key works on British national identity, *Englishness: Politics & Culture* (1986) and *The Battle Over Britain* (1995).

Adrienne Katz is Executive Director of Young Voice, a charity that helps young people to improve their opportunities and the experience of growing up in Britain.

Francesca Klug is Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Human Rights at LSE. She is also Academic Director of the Human Rights Act Research Project (HRARP).

David Lammy is Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department of Health and MP for Tottenham.

Shamit Saggar is a Senior Policy Advisor in the Strategy Unit at the Cabinet Office, on secondment from Queen Mary, University of London.

Ziauddin Sardar is a cultural critic, Muslim scholar and author. His latest books are *A-Z of Postmodern Life: Essays on Globalisation in the Noughties* (2002) and *Why do People Hate America?* (2002).

Michael Wills is Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Criminal Justice System and Labour MP for North Swindon.

Acknowledgements

Foreword by Peter Upton

Discussions on national identity are enmeshed in wider concerns about globalisation and the principles of active citizenship. To some, the concept of national identity is in its final stage of decline along with the nation state ideal, whilst for others multiple-identities such as Afro-British or Indian-British are the signs of a healthy evolution beyond a narrow conscript of Britishness. Globalisation is perceived by some as a steamroller overpowering the unique cultural characteristics of countries and regions and creating a homogenised landscape of conformity. The paradox of globalisation, as Baroness Helena Kennedy QC accurately noted to the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, is that while on the one hand it can threaten regional, national and minority cultures, at the same time it provides the means for ensuring their longevity.

We know that the portrait of globalisation and national identity is complex but we in the UK have lacked wider engagement with the issues. There is a long tradition of distrust in the face of new technology and cultural assertiveness. Multiple identities such as black-British and British-Indian are perceived differently. For some they are the welcome dawn of a refreshingly diverse multicultural environment, one which is comfortable with change. For others these composite identities are seen as fragmentation and the onset of cultural disintegration. Sound bites have reduced these challenges and opportunities of globalisation to a black hats/white hats debate, divorced from most people's daily experience. We do not see the equation that links the movement of refugees to the UK as a reflection of others perception of our identity and culture. This and other elements of Britishness are explored in this book.

It has been suggested that the introduction of citizenship into our schools' curriculum is an admission that we have failed to secure the transmission of agreed cultural values and that these must now be taught. For others, the introduction of citizenship is a step towards a mature discussion about identity and how it is to be constructed, shaped and developed. Our own insecurity and the fragmented nature of the debate on identity is the greatest threat that we face. Without a discussion on our values, on who we are and how we are to be perceived, we run the risk of accepting an impoverished version of our culture and ourselves. This book explores how we can connect with the principles of active citizenship as a component in shaping our view of Britishness and our sense of self.

The post devolution, post 11 September landscape has challenged many of the principles that we thought were secure and have demanded that we look again at how we are perceived and how others perceive us. This collection of papers provides context to the discussion of Britishness and identity.

National identity, cultural relationships and the concept of Britishness are concerned with active citizenship within a vibrant, healthy social democracy where diversity is a celebration of community strength. The British Council promotes this concept through its works in 109 countries across the world, building enduring partnerships based on shared values. These partnerships are respected, admired and welcomed because they are shaped by our belief in mutuality, in reciprocity and in long-term relationships.

London, September 2002

Peter Upton is Director of the Education and Training Group at the British Council

Introduction: Living together after 11 September and the rise of the Right

Mark Leonard

Britishness rarely occupies the centre ground of political debate. But it often lurks behind and shapes some of the most controversial political choices: Should we join the euro? What should our immigration and asylum policies be? Should we intervene in Iraq? Should there be state funding for religious schools?

The thread that links these difficult and different dilemmas is the question of living together – at home as the population becomes ever more diverse and globally as we come to terms with greater interdependence and need to devise new forms of governance to solve our common problems. Identity has always been a site of conflict involving choices and decisions about who to include and who to exclude. It is made up of a potent mix of symbols, myths, historic events, institutions, values and traditions. But the choice of our reference points (whether Margaret Thatcher's celebration of Victorian entrepreneurs, John Major's nostalgia for the close-knit communities of the 1950s, or Tony Benn's evocation of the chartists) is always heavily political.

In this collection of essays, we explore how a modern, inclusive, outward-looking notion of Britishness can be used as a guide through difficult issues – and how it can become a reality. This collection aims to take stock of where the political project of forging a modern and inclusive patriotism has got to in the aftermath of the 11 September attacks, the riots of summer 2001 and the elections in France and Holland. Together these pieces, which were written at various points following the attacks of 11 September, deal with four areas. Firstly, they explore the elements of what could be called a clear political

project which will help us respond coherently to events which challenge. Secondly, they ask us to identify shared British values. Thirdly, they look at the elements in our community which have found it hard to integrate. Finally, they explore the idea of integration – how Britishness plays out in practice in local communities, labour markets and schools.

Britishness as a political project

If British identity is defined primarily through a desire to preserve our political and cultural institutions in their current form, a pride in our heavy industrial heritage, and an adherence to Protestantism, the policy implications will be clear: domestic policy will be driven by a fear of immigration on cultural grounds, and foreign policy by a defence of national sovereignty and a mistrust of multilateral institutions.

If, on the other hand, we define Britishness according to values rather than unchanging institutions or a single religion, and celebrate Britain's global links, its openness to other cultures, its democracy and its creativity, then we will have a foreign policy based on pooling sovereignty with others to solve shared problems, building effective forms of international engagement and immigration policies suited to our economic needs and global responsibilities.

This was the battle for Britishness which Tony Blair pledged to join in one of his first speeches as Labour Party leader when he promised to turn Britain into a "young country". His determination to seize the flag from the Conservative Party was part of a political strategy that also led him to develop progressive narratives around the touchstone issues of crime, defence and the family. The importance of this strategy is underlined by the Conservative politician David Willets: "What our opponents once most feared about us, and perhaps still do to this day, is that somehow Conservatives understood the drumbeat of national identity. We had an ability to reach the hearts of the electors and evoke instincts and emotions which were a closed book to the rationalist progressives".[1]

On the surface the battle for the soul of the country has already been won. Perhaps the most visible sign is the change in tone from the Conservative Party. When the comedian Jim Davidson arrived at Tory Central Office on election night in 2001 he said, "I'm just scratching my head thinking, am I part of this country now?" William Hague had claimed that asylum seekers and the European Union would turn Britain into "a foreign country" – and British voters had comprehensively rejected him. Today, the Conservative Party beams with pride over the appointment of a Hindu as vice-chair, a new unit in Conservative Central Office is scouring the country for candidates from ethnic minorities, and their home affairs spokesperson, Oliver Letwin, poses as the voice of reason, patiently lecturing David Blunkett over his choice of language. As Matthew D'Ancona states in his piece, these moves reflected a long-awaited return to the traditions of the Conservative Party which do not "tell law-abiding people how to live their lives, raise their families, or practice religion".

The embrace by the British people of a modern and inclusive identity is possibly one of the most significant (and under-acknowledged) achievements of the Blair Government in the first term. In spite of the universal mockery of 'Cool Britannia', the shambles of the Millennium Dome, and the scorn poured on political speeches that saw Chicken Tikka Massala as a unifying symbol of modern Britain – there was a palpable shift in the way that Britishness was defined and celebrated by people across the country. But, as Philip Dodd points out in his essay, the limits of this metropolitan celebration of diversity are being tested. And even more importantly, the concern with identity has been more about electoral politics than a way of anchoring a progressive political agenda in the national story. For this to happen the political account of Britishness must be more than celebratory: as well as setting out the values that must be celebrated (diversity, fairness, creativity, internationalism), we must also have a consensus on the British demons that must be exorcised (muddling through, racism, euroscepticism).

Though the contours of a modern and inclusive British identity are

already supported across the political spectrum – our discourse on national identity has continued to lurch from crisis to crisis. The riots of 2001 created a heated debate about English language lessons which polarised people between demands for cultural assimilation and accusations of linguistic imperialism. And the rise of the far Right in Europe both played to British smugness (it couldn't happen here!) and led worried politicians to adopt the language of the Right and talk of 'swamping'. The attacks of 11 September in many ways crystallised these paradoxes by forcing people to choose their allegiances, fuelling prejudice against refugees and migrants.

What became clear is how easily events can throw the whole debate about Britishness into confusion. Take for example the recent dispute over faith schools. While the debate would have been straightforward in a country such as France where secular education is enshrined in the Constitution, in Britain we found ourselves torn between the fear of further isolation among different groups and the belief in community rights which argue in favour of letting each group choose. Ultimately the issue got brushed under the carpet and remains unresolved. British policymakers had no compass to navigate them through a complex debate which had huge implications for key areas – education and community cohesion, among others.

What are British Values – and will they help us make these decisions?
When conflicts arise, the political class searches for ties that bind. Both David Blunkett and Peter Hain recently declared that immigrants need to be 'more British' – but their invocation of 'British values' merely highlighted the extent to which there is confusion about the content of British identity.

Fifty years ago, when Herbert Morrison launched the Festival of Britain, he spoke of a "new Britain springing from the battered fabric of the old". But the country he was celebrating was very different from the one which his grandson, Peter Mandelson, referred to

when he reclaimed the slogan of "New Britain" for Tony Blair's new Labour Party. This shows how our definition of identity needs to reflect the nature of our times – the interdependence of countries and growing migration, and the independence of citizens who no longer fit easily into the traditional categories of nationality, class, gender or race. In a time of peace and prosperity, we must also accept that national identity will be worn more lightly – it is unlikely to be something for which we will have to die, and our attachment to it will be contingent ('my country right or wrong' is not a sentiment felt by my generation).

But the fact that national identity must be lighter and more inclusive does not mean that it should be vague. Whatever the hopes of the liberal elite we can't just be 'global citizens'. The failure of progressives to engage in the conflict about national identity simply leaves the field open for those with a more regressive agenda to set the terms of the debate. In the second section of this collection Michael Wills, David Lammy and Francesca Klug therefore try to provide a more concrete definition of some of our national values.

Of course the quest to define British values means nothing if it is not related to a broader idea of citizenship and embodied in national and local institutions. As Michael Wills points out in his chapter, it is difficult to create a sense of belonging to a nation if people do not feel that being part of this imagined community brings them any benefits. One of the clearest signs that Britain was going through an identity crisis in the last decade was the collapse in support for most of the national institutions: the House of Commons, the Monarchy, the Judiciary, and the Civil Service. It is interesting to note that a few institutions have managed to maintain strong popular support in the polls: the NHS, the Army, and the BBC.

These institutions are popular because they are becoming emblematic of the greater diversity of Britain, as we move from having an identity based on the idea of a majority host community with ethnic minorities

living in its midst (or a 'community of communities', as Bkikhu Parekh calls it) into a mongrel nation with diversity at the heart of the identity of the majority. One could even argue that the reason why these institutions stand out is because they remain the living embodiment of transcendental values which are at the heart of British identity: the NHS stands for fairness and solidarity, the armed forces for Britain's internationalism, and the BBC for our creativity. Each of these values has a long history, but each is being lived out in new ways today, as David Lammy's piece on internationalism shows. The biggest challenge is dealing with clashes of values in a diverse society, and Francesca Klug's essay shows that human rights and the Human Rights Act can help create a framework for dealing with conflicts.

Who is excluded?
The riots in the Northern towns did not just show the gulf between theories of a diverse identity and the reality of segregation on the ground. They also showed that problems of integration at the margins can create a major crisis at the core of our identity. The third section of this book looks at three instances of exclusion.

Ziauddin Sardar examines the difficulties of being a Muslim in Britain after 11 September, and claims that the traditional ways that we have thought of identity (related to geography, race or class) and the intrinsic secularism of Britishness make it difficult for Muslims to feel part of Britain.

Adrienne Katz looks at the pressures on young people in the inner cities. Many are victims of bullying and racism. As a result of being picked on they do not feel they are part of the majority society, or their own communities. She describes the dilemma of fitting in or fighting back, and analyses how a group of 'retaliators' is resorting to gangs, weapons and violence to create an identity and sense of self-worth. Citizenship lessons and model youth parliaments will not reach this group in society, but responsive strategies which are in touch with the micro-realities of young people's lives

(what happens during the walk to school or on the playground) can.

Yasmin Alibhai-Brown writes about the biggest blind spot of the Left on identity. While Ministers will line up to talk about Scottishness, Welshness and the value of diversity, Englishness is the final taboo. Raise the topic and you are given short shrift. Englishness is meaningless (a pastiche identity of maypole dancing and nuns cycling in the mist) and so must be broken down into its meaningful components of Cornish, Geordies, Scousers, etc. Part of the problem is the legitimate fear that tolerating English patriotism might lead to the lunacy of an English Parliament. But it is perfectly possible to give space to Englishness without thinking that an English Parliament would bring decisions any closer to the people than Westminster. The challenge, as Yasmin Alibhai-Brown points out, is surely to get involved in defining an inclusive, progressive English identity rather than retreating from the debate altogether and leaving the ground clear for the peddlers of anachronistic nationalism.

These three instances of exclusion came together spectacularly in the Northern towns last summer: white English exclusion mixing with the anxiety of Muslims, and the alienation of the young 'retaliators' from both of these groups.

Community and integration
Ultimately the success of the quest for a modern British identity will depend on the Government's ability to give British Citizenship meaning for everyone who lives in the country. David Blunkett shows that in an age of migration, it is essential for a society to debate and define its foundation values – and to inculcate them in its own citizens and its newcomers. A clear pathway towards promoting citizenship for newcomers is an essential and progressive step towards creating a framework for migration policies which are dictated by economic and social needs rather than racial or cultural prejudices. Establishing that all people who live or are born in Britain are accepted as long as they accept the responsibilities of citizenship is an essential part of creating

a progressive account of citizenship, but it must not be used to marginalise migrants who wish to retain their original nationality.

Moreover, the trappings of citizenship will be meaningless unless we actually give people a stake in our local communities. In *After Multiculturalism* Yasmin Alibhai-Brown wrote about how multicultural policies which defend group rights and link the allocation of resources to ethnicity can lead to segregation and a perpetual sense of 'minority' status amongst second or third generation children (including those of mixed races).[2] Likewise, attempts to define citizenship in a way that celebrates diversity which do not go hand-in-hand with policies to tackle the stark, racially defined differences that still plague the labour market will fail, as described in Shamit Saggar's essay. By using both 'gross' measurements (which quantify basic statistics such as earning and unemployment levels) and 'net' measurements (which relate these differences to other factors such as gender and education) of 'ethnic penalties' the chapter reveals that minority groups score worse in both the 'net' and the 'gross' stakes. The chapter describes how, for example, Pakistani and Bangladeshi men still earn £163 per week less than their white counterparts with similar educational levels. More worryingly, it shows how stories about the minorities who have 'made it', such as Chinese and Indian-Britons, may not be representative in reality and that these groups' achievements are still not commensurate with their levels of education. As long as 'ethnic penalties' affect certain groups more than others it will be impossible to talk of a nation at ease with itself.

It will be very difficult to create the well-managed system of migration that David Blunkett advocates, unless we make these things work in real communities. Phoebe Griffith and Sacha Chan-Kam uncover how Britain's self-image as a tolerant country belies great ignorance and deep hostility to refugees. They argue that the key to turning this around is to reshape the debate so that it no longer focuses exclusively on who should be allowed in but rather on how the 50% of asylum seekers who are awarded the right to remain can be given the

opportunity to make a full contribution to the British economy and society. They show that integration has to be a two-way process with newcomers having obligations such as learning English and looking for work – but in return the government must supply English lessons, sensible labour market policies, and conduct public education campaigns to try to reduce ignorance. This is essential as our policies for dealing with refugees today can avoid the segregation which could lead to social unrest tomorrow.

Conclusion: Symbolic policies

In her Millennium Lecture Linda Colley argued that politicians should spend less time "asking agonised questions about the viability of Britishness". What would make people relate to Britishness, she concluded, would be the success of policies which both made a difference to people's lives and helped them connect tangibly with the debate.[3]

The government needs to start thinking in terms of small, symbolic innovations which can send positive shock waves across the board and address people's fears and concerns. In this context, the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers will be key because it speaks volumes about the way in which we relate to both the rest of the world and with each other as a nation.

If the government is going to bring its domestic policies in line with its rhetoric about global communities, it needs to devote some real attention to developing innovative policies in this area. One way would be to learn from some of the positive policies around the world. For example, one policy which could seriously reshape the debate would be to adopt a *UK Refugee Sponsorship Scheme* based on the Canadian sponsorship project described in Chapter 11. This could do for the current programme of rejuvenating Britishness what Thatcher's council house policies did for her economic reforms. Like Thatcher's policy which has had a lasting impact precisely because it encapsulated the ethos of the Thatcher government – spreading the message of property-owning capitalism to those considered working class – a sponsorship scheme could help displace the demons that plague the debate about British identity.

While there is concrete evidence about the ways in which refugees in Canada benefit directly from this scheme, the dynamic of having a community sponsoring a refugee could yield practical and symbolic rewards. Community involvement of this kind is an ideal way of turning around myths of 'scrounging' and of promoting a debate about common needs. It would encapsulate what David Blunkett refers to as "building community solutions to social problems" in his chapter by making British sponsors both get to know refugees and giving them a stake in their future. The move would also be a straightforward means of injecting extra cash into the elements of the system which remain under-funded. Though the state would need to provide safeguards to ensure that the system would not be open to abuse – checking whether sponsors are suitable, guaranteeing living standards, ensuring that the system does not descend into cherry-picking – the funds for this scheme would be raised locally through voluntary initiatives. Arguments about 'special' and 'preferential' treatment would therefore not hold because sponsors would be acting voluntarily.

The potential symbolic impact of this scheme could be even greater. Firstly, the scheme could be held up as an instantly recognisable reflection of British tolerance and fair play. Secondly, it would be a reflection of our intrinsic internationalism. It would help address the clash which exists between the motives which drive our interventions in conflicts abroad, as in the case of Kosovo, and the fact that we somehow find it much harder to extend a helping hand when people fleeing those very same conflicts arrive on our shores. Finally, it would reflect British talent for creativity and openness to new ideas, opening people up to the fact that all newcomers are a source of creativity for societies which are ready to accept them. In short, a policy such as the *UK Refugee Sponsorship Scheme* could be held up as a useful living example of the best features of Britishness and

could help address some of the challenges addressed throughout this collection.

The frameworks which we adopt for making sense of a diverse British identity and the policies that they inform in local communities will be the key to deciding whether Britishness can become anchored as an inclusive identity. It is the labour market and social policies we adopt for managing integration of a few thousand that will determine the lived reality for millions in the future.

Mark Leonard is Director of The Foreign Policy Centre

1 David Willets MP, CPS Meeting at the Conservative Party Conference, Thursday 8 October 1998
2 Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, *'After Multiculturalism'* (The Foreign Policy Centre: 2000)
3 Linda Colley, *'Britishness in the 21st Century'* (Lecture delivered in December 1999)

PART I

BRITISHNESS AS A POLITICAL PROJECT

1   The Challenge for New Labour

Philip Dodd

Over the last few years Britain and Britishness have been unsettled and that is something to celebrate, even if the causes of the instability have been variable. They've sometimes been joyful, sometimes unpleasant or downright tragic. We now live in a post 'Cool Britannia', post devolution, post Macpherson, post Afghanistan war, post Queen Mother's death Britain, and each of those 'moments' has demanded that we examine ourselves in the mirror, and try to come to terms with who we are, who we wish to be, what we share and what makes us various. Most recently, Jean-Marie Le Pen and, more clearly, the late Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn have reminded all of us that the political Right can play a much more sophisticated national identity game than some opponents once believed was possible. Even the current Tory party is trying to modernise its sense of national identity politics – just note its forays into the 'ethnic minority' communities, the noisy sacking of Ann Winterton, and their quietly relaxed public attitude towards sexual diversity.

It's increasingly easy to hear the grumbles of disquiet and even concern over the unsettled character of this new self-questioning, increasingly noisy Britain. All this diversity and proliferation of identities is fine, so the argument goes, but it must have a limit. We need to discover what binds us together as well as what differentiates us – without that, the Right can exploit difference, some parts of this community of communities will not embrace their role in society, crime and disaffection will increase, and we shall inherit an atomised and fractured country. That's the note that can be heard in the public utterances of David Blunkett and Peter Hain.

I understand these concerns but, before we rush towards closure, let's just remind ourselves that as recently as the 1980s, there was one dominant version of Britain. This saw most of the rest of the world as enemies without (the residue of which can be found in Thatcher's comment that most of what was bad in the 20th century came from Europe), divided the British into 'us' and 'them', harked back to an imaginary Victorian Britain as the template of self-reliant Britain, and thought of culture only in terms of heritage, a monument which needed tending. Even in the apparently kindlier days of the early 1990s under Major, Britain was still an implacably centralised state, with its Prime Minister harking back to Orwell's wartime vision of nuns on bicycles, and early mist. It was a vision of an old, united (and centralised) white Britain.

For all the opprobrium dumped on Blair's Britain and on 'Cool Britannia', they did help to shift the paradigm, even if the evidence suggests that this is the case domestically rather than internationally. In the 1980s and early 1990s, there was, at times, an unnerving dislocation between the dominant account of Britain sustained by traditional institutions and the complex and creative, and at times difficult-to-negotiate, life of urban, diverse Britain. 'Cool Britannia' was an attempt to respond to that Britain as much as was the (not wholehearted) commitment to devolution and the (bungled) reform of the Lords. The present government was always more relaxed celebrating the achievements of a 'community of communities' Britain than negotiating the difficult complexities of such a society – as the political responses to the Macpherson report highlighted. But I would argue that its initial relaxed response to a multicultural Britain was attractive, given how much earlier regimes had simply dramatised a diverse society as a 'problem'.

If I seem to have given a good deal of attention to the government, it's because since Blair became leader of the Labour Party and even more since he became Prime Minister, notions of national identity have been a core part of the New Labour project. It's not only that the Prime Minister himself has made speeches on the subject but the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, has published his own reflections on the subject as have politicians such as Michael Wills. This government has recognised that people don't live by policy alone; that politicians need

to be able to provide a larger framework in which any policy initiative can be understood; and that the framework needs to be articulated as a national story, since stories matter far beyond the ceremonies of state. Blair needed to tell a new story about what being British means in order to make sense of a country and its people, both to themselves and to others. His 'new' Britain, was inventive, culturally diverse, forward and outward-looking. It was less a modernised story than a radically different one. There has been much less of such 'national reimagining' talk since last year's election; and when a government minister has told a story recently, it has tended to be the simple if limited one of "delivery, delivery, delivery". Gone are the heady days when the talk was of a new 'rebranded' Britain. When national identity hits the headlines now, it's in terms of the neglect of parts of the 'white' community – even the CRE has been engaged in such talk – or of the need to integrate, as Peter Hain said, the Muslim community, a minority of which, it's claimed, is "isolationist". Let us for a moment, not rush to judgment on this new strategy – because that's what it appears to be, not some unrehearsed outburst from individual ministers – but try to understand it.

Twenty-twenty vision is always easy in retrospect but it's now clear that New Labour's initial talk of an outward-looking, hybridised, ever-changing Britain was a profoundly metropolitan one – or rather it answered the experience of urban and particularly metropolitan Britain, or perhaps I mean England. As Bhikhu Parekh has said: "The extent of the territorial concentration of blacks and Asians is often not appreciated. The vast majority of them, just over 96%, live in England, with only 2% in Scotland and just over 1% in Wales. Within England a large number of them are concentrated in London: 57% of the UK's Afro-Caribbeans live in Greater London, as do 82% of Africans, 49% of Bangladeshis, 42% of Indians, 35% of Chinese and 19% of Pakistanis".[1] That is not, of course, to say that the outward-looking Britain only pertains to the metropolis but on a day to day level it speaks better to our experience – and I speak as a metropolitan – than to those who live in other parts of Britain. But to those outside the metropolitan penumbra – or even to those groups who are socially excluded within the metropolis – the experience of ever-present change can seem a process of dispossession rather than enrichment – not least where unemployment is high and participation in the ever-changing culture is impossible to afford. It is clear in those circumstances that the call to fundamentalism of whatever kind – and there are as many white fundamentalisms as there are ethnic minority fundamentalisms – is seductive. The recent changes in the world have robbed these communities of their old stories and Blair's 'new' Britain story, full of the promise of a knowledge-driven economy and of a mongrel culture, can't easily speak to them, or for them.

It's impossible to doubt that the 'success' of Le Pen, the rise of the Fortuyn tendency, and the very local success of the BNP in Burnley have in each of the relevant countries, and across Europe more generally, rattled the settled political parties' confidence that their existing stories are sufficiently compelling to at least a minority of their populations. In Britain, one response has been that of Anthony Giddens who has suggested that the troubling rise of new nationalisms can only be addressed and squashed if governments are "tough on immigration" as well as "tough on the causes of hostility to immigrants".[2] The comments by Blunkett and Hain clearly need to be seen in this context – a strategic attempt to outmanoeuvre a new nationalism by addressing the issues that it claims only it has the bravery to address. But at the same time, Labour is very clear that it cannot and must not be confused with these new nationalisms. In a Guardian interview Peter Hain said clearly and simply that Britain welcomes "the contribution that the Muslims make to British culture. They enrich our culture".[3] But that's not what made the headlines, nor was it supposed to do so. The headline in *The Guardian* was "End asylum soft touch, says Hain". There are those who think that this is potentially lethal pandering to a racist politics that can only strengthen the Right. The fate of Jospin in France is adduced as evidence of what happens to a politician who allows his enemy to determine the ground on which he fights. On the other hand, there are others who believe that, only by talking about

such concerns, articulating certain fears, whether unfounded or not, can the Right be kept at bay.

It seems to me that this moment of danger is also an opportunity and that's what needs to be grasped. It's not good enough to ventriloquise people's fears, nor to imply, on the other side, as Gary Younge did in *The Guardian*, that all is well and that New Labour is just pandering to an unrepresentative and prejudiced minority. What needs to be developed is a story of the great changes that are sweeping across the world, in which people can make sense of the pains as well as pleasures of their lives. Above all, what needs to be grasped is that this is the first moment when the national story which Labour has made so central a part of its strategy needs to become a European story in order to be effective. All of us know that the issues of economic migration and of asylum seekers can only be addressed at a European rather than national level, and that this goes all the way from harmonisation on admission procedures – which entails an argument about standards – to arguments about the contribution of migration to European culture (and the contribution of European migrants to other cultures, not least in the later 19th century). Equally, while it is clear that those who feel dispossessed of their own cultures across Europe – and they can be both black and white – have issues specific to their location, it is also true that their experience needs to be understood in terms of the larger European story for it to be properly grasped. This is one of those defining moments not because, as some seem to think, fascism is again stalking Europe – although the rise of the Right is serious – but because politicians across Europe need to address the issues that are arising at a European level. Blair's government has been intelligent in its awareness that its national story needs to be recast to respond to changing circumstances. Now there's a need to recast the national story in European terms. It's a test they mustn't fail.

Philip Dodd is Director of the Institute of Contemporary Arts

[1] Bhiku Parekh, *'Integrating Minorities',* (ICA:2000).
[2] *The Guardian,* 3.5.02.
[3] *The Guardian*, 13.5.02.

2   Why the Right Must Embrace Multiculturalism

Matthew D'Ancona

Multiculturalism is too often discussed as if it were an option, or, in policy terms, an objective, or even, by some on the far Right, as a problem to be eradicated. The reality, of course, is that multiculturalism – by which I mean any form of social organisation in which many cultural traditions find expression – is simply the status quo. It is the way we live now.

As John Gray writes in his masterly analysis of contemporary society, *Two Faces of Liberalism,*[1] "pluralism is an historical fate", a vibrant reality rather than a distant prospect. We already live in communities in which ways of life are commingled, or "morally multi-lingual" in Gray's phrase. Each person, in turn, may find a host of rival cultural claims made upon him: by faith, generation, family, business aspiration, and so on. Individuals, as well as societies, are multicultural now. The old certainties and parameters have been banished. The most successful golf player in the world is black. The most popular rap singer in the world is white. England's best player in the 2002 World Cup was a black man called Rio. One MP I spoke to recently represents a constituency in which 160 languages are spoken. The "historical fate" to which Gray refers is all around us. There are some Conservatives who recoil angrily from this. But they do so in vain: they want to conserve something which simply no longer exists.

The dark shadow of 11 September and the advances of the far Right on the continent have brought these issues back into sharp perspective. In particular, the position occupied by militant Islam in liberal democracies has posed all manner of questions. Before his assassination, the Dutch demagogue Pim Fortuyn had devised a

completely new political mutation: the brutal reflex of some within a profoundly liberal society against what they perceived as the unbearable threat of fundamentalist Islam. Fortuyn's argument, he claimed, was to do with culture, not race. He represented a strange paradox – a politician using the methods and rhetoric of the far Right, supposedly to defend the freedoms of the liberal society against the incursions of Islamism. He represented, if you will, intolerant liberalism.

In Britain, meanwhile, the furious competition between the parties over asylum policy proceeds, Labour having now managed – somehow – to outflank the Conservatives with its rhetoric. In May 2002, a leaked Government 'options paper' proposed the use of Royal Navy warships and RAF planes to intercept 'bogus' refugees. Asylum policy, of which the Prime Minister has taken personal charge, has been officially militarised. David Blunkett, borrowing Margaret Thatcher's language in the late 1970s, has raised the prospect of the children of refugees "swamping the local school." New Labour watched the trouncing of Lionel Jospin with horror: its strategists argue that ministers can give no quarter on asylum or immigration, lest the BNP and other parties of the extreme Right step into the breach. The result has been a policy debate more debased than any in living memory. The malfunctioning of our asylum system reflects a failure of international conventions, the perversity of judge-made law, and the administrative chaos that reigns as a consequence. If robust language were enough, the problem would have been resolved years ago. But it has proved quite resistant to the muscular and sometimes hysterical rhetoric of frightened politicians.

One senses in all this a lag between political language and social reality: talk of "swamping", "floods", "torrents", and the advent of a "foreign land" may nurture atavistic prejudices, but bear little relation to what is actually happening. The first step the political class must take is to accept that multiculturalism is inevitable. In the modern world, national boundaries are becoming ever more transparent, and movement between nations is taken completely for granted. People travel from country to country as easily as money flows across borders. Leave aside the question of immigration for a moment, and concentrate instead on the life experience of ordinary citizens: the holidays they go on, the cheap flights they buy, the languages they learn, the faces they see on every street, the countries they visit before adulthood, the food they eat. Information, travel, religion, work, literature and television all contribute to the brew. Cosmopolitanism is no longer a middle class preserve. The homogeneous society in which most people probably still imagine they live is, in fact, illusory. There is an endless interchange going on, what Salman Rushdie has called the "mongrelisation" of modern life.

"So what?" say the enemies of multiculturalism, especially those on the far Right. Inevitable doesn't mean good. In this case, however, I would say that it does. I tend, unapologetically, to the view which is far more common on the Centre-Right in America (read the *Wall Street Journal*'s editorials) that diversity is a good in itself because societies in which many talents and many ways of life are allowed to co-exist will do better, not least economically, than those where difference is stifled and suppressed.

Human mobility is a natural consequence of open labour markets. Societies that adapt to this mobility will prosper. Those that don't, won't. Societies that close themselves off from other cultures will wither. Those that don't, won't. In this sense, multiculturalism is not just a sign of the times; it is a sign of progress. It is not a threat to nationhood, but in the modern world, the very essence of nationhood. The celebrations to mark the Golden Jubilee in June 2002 were a carnival of eclecticism, spectacularly diverse, encompassing pop and classical music, tradition and modernity, pomp and informality, and people of all ages, creeds and ethnic origins. The parade on the Mall was a sparkling celebration of British pluralism, a pageant which paid tribute to the profound role that immigration from the Commonwealth has played in the evolution of patriotism in this country over the past half century. The gospel choir, Bollywood performers and Notting Hill

Carnival dancers were all vibrant proof that those who would pit traditional Britishness against its modern variant, hoping to detect irreconcilable tensions, miss the point completely. The Jubilee revealed a sense of nationhood which is not embattled and defensive, but porous, adaptable and confident.

Does the Centre-Right have a role to play in all this? Assuredly. The so-called 'forces of conservatism' are at their best, and their most potent, when they celebrate the virtues of pluralism. One of the reasons that Tories claim affection for the Union, for example, is because of its institutional celebration of difference, its capacity to organise different nations and national cultures in a single structure. The best conservative thinkers have always argued for mutual tolerance and resisted those who would tell law-abiding people how to live their lives, raise their families, or practise religion. The essence of Britishness, it seems to me, is the understanding that unity is best achieved when diversity is most respected.

On this, as on so much else, the extreme Right has always been wrong. They were wrong to predict that the first wave of Commonwealth immigration in the 1950s and 1960s would plunge Britain into civil chaos. They were wrong to believe that the children of that generation would fail to contribute to British society. The gains made by the extreme Right in the local elections of 2002 – the first council seats won by the BNP since 1993 – were deeply regrettable. But they were tiny by the standards of continental Europe. The British people remain utterly unpersuaded by the extreme Right position on race and culture.

This is not to say, however, that the multicultural reality of British society does not pose difficult questions. Quite the opposite in fact. To use Gray's language again: we face an endless quest for 'modus vivendi' as we steer a path between the potential conflicts which arise from competing value systems. And on this path lie two principal obstacles. The first is bigotry. The second is political correctness. We should not be so closed-minded or self-deluding as to pretend that the

problems of racism and intolerance are not real. Nor, however, should we be so tongue-tied that we cannot discuss the issues which arise from our multicultural society openly and honestly.

The Macpherson inquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence was a good case study. It confirmed that the police had a long way to go in their relations with ethnic minorities; it also revealed some disgraceful errors. But the endless repetition of the words 'institutional racism' – applied in the years since the report to almost every organisation in Britain – and the hounding of Sir Paul Condon, a policeman utterly committed to stamping out racist behaviour, generated more heat than light. Initiatives such as the Government's unsuccessful attempt to impose ethnic visitor quotas linked to funding on museums and galleries are no more than metropolitan gimmicks.

The test will come with hard cases, not soft options. There is a strong argument for Muslim schools. But such schools must enact the national curriculum to the letter, and prepare their pupils – including their female pupils – for full participation in British civic society in exactly the same way as any church school would. Likewise, we should have a blasphemy law which applies to all religions or none. But there can be no quarter given to the sort of groups which publicly supported the appalling captivity of Salman Rushdie for so many years.

The American political scientist Benjamin R. Barber has argued that our era has become the battlefield for a war between "Jihad" – religious and tribal fundamentalism in all its forms – and "McWorld" – the global culture of corporate capitalism.[2] Fragmentation competes with homogenisation. From this melee are emerging new, infinitely complex societies. What is needed is a 21st century notion of common citizenship to which all cultures can sign up as the foundation of peaceful co-existence. But how easy is it to establish, proselytise and, if necessary, enforce the measures which would bolster a new form of citizenship of this kind? The challenge for a multicultural nation like Britain is not to identify the points of difference between its component

cultures. That's obvious. The point is whether we have the courage to decide what we should agree upon.

Matthew D'Ancona is Deputy Editor of *The Sunday Telegraph*

[1]   John Gray, *'The Two Faces of Liberalism',* (New Press: 2000).
[2]   Benjamin R. Barber, *'Jihad vs McWorld: How Globalism and Tribalism are Reshaping the World',* (Times Books: 1995).

PART II

WHAT ARE BRITISH VALUES?

3   What Defines British Values?

Michael Wills

Few of us spend much time walking around each day reflecting on who we are. Our identity is like our face – there, but not an issue except when suddenly a mirror is held up to it. Most of the time, issues of national identity are latent and take second place in our daily political life to more immediate concerns about public services. But latent does not mean unimportant. National identity inevitably remains a potent force in our public life, as so much of what drives politics flows from how and where we identify our allegiances.

The unrest in Bradford and Oldham last summer, closely followed by the terrible events of 11 September, posed immediate challenges to us all but also confronted us with deeper questions about our national identity. At first glance these events, in different ways, appear to challenge the continuing importance of national identity and to support those who argue that the era of the nation state is past and new forms of political allegiance and identity are emerging.

The dreadful events of 11 September represented the horrifying impact of those who come from many different nationalities and speak several different languages, united not by national or religious beliefs but by a fundamentalist fanaticism that overrides such allegiances. Opposed to them is a coalition that brings together many different nations from all over the world. The physical attack on 11 September may have been on the United States but it was part of a campaign against all those who share the values of liberal democracy and freedom.

But for all the global characteristics of the present war against terrorism, its roots still lie in our sense of ourselves as a nation. It was his sense of our national destiny that impelled Tony Blair so immediately to stand shoulder to shoulder with the United States. It was not only a response to a threat to our own national security. It was also an expression of the Atlantic identity of this country, rooted in our own unique history and culture.

The alienation of some young Muslims in Britain today, evident last summer and in the way some responded to the aftermath of the events of 11 September, may suggest an alienation from their British identity. But I believe their alienation flows more from the consequences of not securing a sense of belonging among all our citizens. Anecdotal evidence suggests that those young Muslims who have responded most vigorously in this way come from areas which have been excluded economically and socially. The politics of national identity rarely exist in isolation from other forces: they usually act as a focus for them, an intensifier, and that is what appears to be happening here.

Many Muslims feel comfortably Muslim and British. For them there is no conflict between these two ways of identifying themselves. But we need to ask why this is not true today for all Muslims in Britain. If a nation does not meet the economic and social needs of some of its citizens, we should not be surprised if their cultural and emotional allegiances are ambivalent and if those plural allegiances, which I believe can provide a rich, complex and healthy politics sometimes lead to confusion, alienation and conflict. And this is clearly what we are witnessing now.

If our national identity is to mean anything and if it is to continue to do what it has done so effectively in the past, which is to sustain that sense of belonging which lies at the heart of healthy democratic politics – and I believe it does and it should do this – then determined action to tackle social and economic exclusion remains a fundamentally important task for government.

For, despite all the challenges it has faced over the last two hundred years, the nation state remains at the heart of our political allegiances. Global political change after the end of empires, profound economic

and technological change producing all the phenomena of globalisation and growing interdependence, consequent institutional change with increasing reliance on multilateral institutions such as the EU, NATO and the WTO, all challenge the mid-20th century conceptions of the nation. But confronted by such changes, the need to belong somewhere is more acute than ever and the nation state remains the key political mechanism which roots us and to which we give our allegiance. Much of what anchors us politically, economically and culturally continues to flow from the nation state – our systems of education and justice, our public services of health and broadcasting, and our political institutions. The ties that bind us, that secure us in our own place and time – our shared language, culture, social and political institutions and norms – still derive fundamentally from the nation state.

Survey after survey indicates that for the great majority of people in the United Kingdom, our British identity remains a critical part of how we see ourselves. But its importance does not preclude perennial conflicts over its character. It is therefore essential that as a nation we are clear about what we value as a nation and that we are clear about the nature of that to which we owe such fundamental allegiance.

Ensuring that our national identity is secure is, arguably, more important in Britain than in any other European country because more than any other European country our national identity is a matter of choice – we are born English or Scottish or Pakistani but together we choose to be British. Being British is not a matter of ethnicity or territory, it is a choice to live together.

National identity has always been contested – in this country and elsewhere. It is not something ordained eternally by governments but something people decide for themselves. And it has tangled roots.

For many, it is our yesterdays that define us today. But what we choose from our history as exemplifying our Britishness can radically diverge. Margaret Thatcher's hankering after Victorian entrepreneurs points

towards a different conception of national character from Tony Benn's honouring of the Chartists and Levellers. In the debates over asylum policy, the constant affirmation of our proud heritage as a home for those fleeing persecution and torture emphasises an inclusive and outward-looking vision of modern Britain.

Our attachment to place is fundamental. Our national institutions are important although we should not make a fetish out of their remaining unchanged. They represent the lived experience of the British people through history. They are the product of contest and struggle, continually evolving in response to political, social and economic change, developing in an unceasing conversation between past and future. But, as the practical manifestation of our 'imagined community', they are nonetheless critical in shaping and driving our sense of national identity.

The Union itself as an institution is critically important in shaping and defining much of what I believe is important about being British. I believe that our specifically British identity still matters today, decades after the end of the Empire which was once supposed to be its sustaining lifeforce. Because whether Britishness has evolved through the mists of time or was a construct created by myth-making politicians, it has come to possess an organic life of its own. And, for all the problems we have faced, I believe Britain has come to be a remarkably successful experiment in multinational and multicultural living. I believe that the union of four nations over hundreds of years has demanded a tolerance and openness to others that is the hallmark of a decent and dynamic society. The Union has accustomed all of us to a plural national identity. It is intrinsic in the nature of the Union that we have multiple political allegiances: we can comfortably be Scottish-and-British or Cornish-and-British or Geordie-and-British or Bengali-and-British. And all the research shows how comfortable the British people are with such plural allegiances.

In the end, I believe our national identity resides above all in our shared 'British' values and qualities – creativity built on tolerance, openness

and adaptability, work and self-improvement, strong communities and an outward-looking approach to the world – all of which flow from our unique island geography and history, all rooted in a deep sense of fairness and decency.

Of course, as abstract values, these are not unique to this country. But their particular character, as reflected and refined in our institutions over time and the way in which a distinctive tone has been imparted to them throughout our modern history by our unique island geography and historical experience, create a distinctively British identity. If we are to reaffirm our national identity, we must engage vigorously in a conversation to ensure that a shared view of what it means to be British, and what should be cherished about it, continues to be reflected throughout our national institutions and public life.

This is a matter for national debate and any individual view will be contested vigorously. It is complex territory but I do not believe it will be most fruitfully contested where politically the debate so often focuses today. Over the last few years the pathology of the late 20th century Conservative Party has driven them to view our national identity through the prism of the European Union. Constructive engagement with Europe they have seen as a threat to our Britishness. It is a curious approach. Our relationship with the outside world should not be a test for our sense of ourselves. A secure sense of ourselves means we do not need to feel threatened by foreigners and retreat into a fearful and narrow insularity. Instead, a robust confidence in who we are should enable us to face outwards, actively engaged with the outside world while pursuing British interests, developing our trade and good neighbourly relations with our partners – within the framework of the multilateral institutions that secure them.

Throughout the history of these islands, we have been a dynamic and an outward-looking society, one that has always seen itself as playing a positive role in the affairs of the world, one that has never stood aloof from continental Europe but has always been actively engaged in its

affairs – from the times of the Plantagenets and Tudors and Hanoverians to the governments of Palmerston and Churchill. We have never been frightened that such engagement would dilute or threaten our sense of ourselves. On the contrary, such engagement has always been an integral part of being British. And so it is today.

Of course, we must resist those who would centralise the EU. But that on its own will not shore up our Britishness. It would not address a single one of the great challenges to our national identity from global political, economic and technological change – from growing interdependence and the consequent reliance on multilateral institutions and from cultural and social change.

The task is different: we must reaffirm a proper space for the public in our national life and start the debate about what our national identity means to us in 2002. This is not a dialogue of the deaf but a conversation with ourselves, rooted in our understanding of our intrinsic strengths as a people and what has truly made Britain great over the centuries.

Michael Wills is Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Criminal Justice System and Labour MP for North Swindon

4   Human Rights: A Common Standard for All Peoples?

Francesca Klug

The link between tall towers, diverse communities and a common language is of biblical proportions. Literally. In the Old Testament story of the Tower of Babel we learn that those who build high to boast loud risk being brought down to size and that the struggle to understand each other is made much more difficult when we speak different languages, both literally and metaphorically. We have been confronted with these issues, it seems, since the beginning of recorded history. In the year 2002 – as we grope around in the aftermath of 11 September and tensions and disturbances closer to home – we find we are still grappling with them.

11 September
When those Gemini planes sliced through the Twin Towers we learnt what unites us as well as what separates us as human beings. Anger, bewilderment, empathy, shock. These are profoundly human responses which momentarily, at least, bound together nearly everyone in the UK. We walked down the street, got on a bus, went in a shop, knowing that we were all reverberating from this terrifying event.

Yet even as our common humanity was underlined by the horror we shared at the intentional mass slaughter of our fellow human beings, we knew that we could not all experience this atrocity on equal terms. Inevitably we viewed it through the prism of our own backgrounds and experiences.

If the significance of 11 September is as much about lifting the veil on changes that had already happened as about ushering in a new era, one consequence was to illuminate the extent to which multiple identities

had become commonplace in the UK. Whereas once only international relations experts were wheeled out to explain events on a world scale, now different sections of the British community were frequently called upon to do so.

Entire communities were held to account. Muslims up and down the country felt they had to prove they did not support the attacks and that their religion did not condone such atrocities. Many were physically or verbally harassed simply because they were Muslim (and sometimes because they were Sikh but mistaken for Muslims). Some were picked up by the police under anti-terrorist legislation (for the most part to be released or charged only with immigration offences). Afghanis, many of whom were asylum seekers who fled the brutal Taliban regime, found themselves moved to challenge the portrayal of their country as irredeemably primitive and misogynistic. Members of the Jewish community, regardless of their political affiliations, were linked with Israel, which was in turn blamed for the whole conflagration. Above and beyond this, the rest of the world had encroached on these shores. It can hardly have escaped the notice of anyone in this country that events far away can determine our fate day to day from the state of our economy to our personal security. To that extent we are all global Britons now.

Communal conflict
It was against this backdrop, on 9 December 2001 that the Home Secretary, David Blunkett, declared in an interview with the *Independent on Sunday* that: "We have norms of acceptability and those who come into our home – for that is what it is – should accept those norms just as we would have to do if we went elsewhere."[1]

At the point when most of us were starting to feel our way in this evolving global environment of plural loyalties and identities, the Home Secretary articulated a vision of the UK which revolved around 'we' whose 'home' this is and 'those' who need to 'accept' our 'norms'. It was like an echo from a previous era. While emphasising in the same interview that he was "in favour of diversity" and "the interplay of

different cultures", Mr Blunkett was widely quoted as adding that "we won't tolerate the intolerable under the guise of cultural difference", citing enforced marriages and genital mutilation as practices that "are unacceptable in Britain."[2]

The background to these statements was heralded by events prior to 11 September. During the spring and early summer of 2001 there were disturbances between different sections of the community in a number of Northern towns, notably Oldham, Bradford and Burnley. With substantial evidence of infiltration by the British National Party, longstanding tensions over the distribution of resources between Asian and white communities in these deprived urban areas erupted into violent conflict over a period of many weeks.[3]

Among other initiatives, the Home Secretary established a Review Team, led by Ted Cantle, on local policies to promote social cohesion. It was on the eve of the publication of this report which recommended "a greater sense of citizenship based on (a few) common principles"[4] that the Home Secretary made his 'norms of acceptability' statement to the *Independent.* A few months later, in a White Paper on immigration asylum and citizenship, the government expanded the scope of its concern about 'cultural differences' to include marriages to partners from abroad (or more specifically the Asian sub-continent). There is, the paper stated, "a discussion to be had within those communities that continue the practice of arranged marriages as to whether more of these could be undertaken within the settled community here."[5] Expanding on this reference, Mr Blunkett subsequently said: "We need to be able to encourage people to respond, particularly young women, who do actually want to be able to marry someone who speaks their language – namely English – who has been educated in the same way as they have, and has similar social attitudes."[6]

The Debate on 'Britishness'
The ensuing reaction to these references in the press and broadcasting media was as polarised as the communities whose cohesion was at the

centre of the debate. The *Sun's* Richard Littlejohn applauded the Home Secretary's "bold attempt to reign in the tyranny of multiculturalism and forge a common British identity."[7] Nick Griffin, leader of the British National Party promised to "quote David Blunkett, but only saying we've been saying these kind of things."[8] Lord Tebbit said "We should all be grateful to Mr Blunkett for stating what most of us had long believed."[9] The Home Secretary received vocal support for some of his statements, in particular the importance he attached to learning English for participating in civic life.[10] A subsequent BBC poll found widespread approval for this proposal.[11]

However, at the other end of the scale Milena Buyum of the National Assembly of Racism spoke in similar terms to a number of other commentators when she said: "Telling established British communities whom they should or should not marry is quite abhorrent to these communities. To propose interfering in their private choice of who to marry is a big infringement of their cultural rights."[12] Yasmin Alibhai-Brown lamented the implication "that people of colour entering this country are coming into someone else's home and must therefore always conform, never dissent from the set norms, and always be grateful."[13] The term 'British' she suggested, "has lost its old meanings and symbols. It is time to bury that version and plant a new vision which brings together all the tribes of Britain."[14]

Yet the Home Secretary, both through the White Paper and many subsequent statements, emphasised that it was not "assimilation to a prevailing monoculture"[15] which the government was proposing.[16] On the contrary diversity was endorsed as "a source of pride" which "helps to explain our cultural vitality, the strength of our economy and our strong international links."[17] According to the White Paper on citizenship, notably subtitled *Diversity in Modern Britain:* "Common citizenship is not about cultural uniformity, nor is it born out of some narrow and outdated view of what it means to be British. The Government welcomes the richness of the cultural diversity which immigrants have brought to the UK – our society is multicultural and is

shaped by its diverse peoples."[18] This is as strong a statement in support of an evolving sense of 'Britishness' as you are likely to see anywhere.

So how is it that protagonists on all sides read a similar message into the Home Office's string of statements on citizenship, only differing in their reactions to it? How is it that they all understood the message to be, not the value of difference, but the requirement of conformity? For or against, what people heard, in *Evening Standard* prose, was that "immigrant communities should respect the British way of life and not engage in practices which might have been acceptable in Africa or Asia, but are not British."[19] Or in the inimitable style of a *Daily Star* leader "When in Rome, do as the Romans do."[20]

Integration into what?
The government's stated aspiration in the White Paper is "social integration."[21] To this end, it is proposed that we develop a "stronger understanding of what citizenship means" to replace the historically "weak sense of what active citizenship should entail."[22]

The components of this 'stronger citizenship' are not spelt out in full. But the proposed contours are quite clear. First, citizenship should be 'active' in the sense of implying "full participation in British society."[23] Second, diversity is not only accepted but positively welcomed. "We want British citizenship positively to embrace the diversity of background, culture and faiths that is one of the hallmarks of Britain in the 21st century", it states.[24]

Third, the naturalisation process should be orientated towards learning about becoming British. To this end, aspiring citizens will have to pass an English language test, swear a slightly updated oath of allegiance to the Queen which "reflects a commitment to citizenship, cohesion and community" and attend a new citizenship ceremony. A short statement about "what it means to be a British citizen" will also be issued to all new applicants.[25] Fourth, integration is defined to mean acceptance of certain basic values: "The laws, rules and practices which govern our

democracy uphold our commitment to the equal worth and dignity of all our citizens."[26]

Without any elaboration, the White Paper proposes that "the Human Rights Act 1988 can be viewed as a key source of values that British citizens should share." This unexpected link between the new Human Rights Act and the search for a set of common values which could aid "cohesion" and "social integration," begs more questions than answers. Firstly, how can a statute that confers legal rights on individuals be a source of common values? Second, is the White Paper inferring that the Act is essentially an expression of British norms? Third, if not, then what is the source of values in the Act and do they have the potential to aid social cohesion in a diverse society?

The Human Rights Act as a statement of values
Responding to these in order, the link between the Human Rights Act (HRA) and the values which define modern Britain is not immediately clear. The only time when the Act reaches public consciousness, by and large, is when the tabloid press has fun at its expense following a court judgment it does not like.[27] But the HRA is effectively our bill of rights and bills of rights, as is well known, are more than legal documents. In 18th century France and America, and more recently in Canada and South Africa, they have helped to reflect a country's national identity by affirming the principles it stands for in a simple document expressed in broad terms. Ronald Dworkin, the renowned law professor has explained: "Most contemporary constitutions declare individual rights against the government in very broad and abstract ways…the moral reading proposes that we all – judges, lawyers, citizens – interpret and apply these abstract clauses on the understanding that they invoke moral principles about political decency and justice."[28]

Of course what sets the British route to a bill of rights apart from many others is that the HRA was passed without the kind of social upheaval or constitutional revolution that generally precedes such a development.[29]

Labour promised to incorporate the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into UK law in its 1997 manifesto after a long campaign by radical lawyers and civil rights groups which was, generally speaking, lost on the rest of the population.[30]

Lord Browne-Wilkinson, the former Law Lord, has described the ECHR as a "code of morals."[31] The principles it upholds – the right not to be subject to inhuman or degrading treatment, to have one's dignity, lifestyle and privacy respected, to listen to one's conscience, to speak and protest freely and choose whether or not to marry and found a family – together paint a picture of what a society based on mutual respect and tolerance should look like. Rights to life, liberty, security and a fair trial and prohibitions on forced labour, torture and inhuman punishment all point to a vision of what a just society might be. Taken as a whole, the rights and limitations set down in the ECHR are described by the European Court of Human Rights as the "values of a democratic society"[32] which are "pluralism, tolerance and broadmindedness."[33] But in case there is any misunderstanding, "…democracy does not simply mean that the views of a majority must always prevail; a balance must be achieved which ensures the fair and proper treatment of minorities and avoids any abuse of a dominant position."[34]

Our bill of rights is different from all other Acts in that, expressed in very general terms, its aim is to ensure that all our laws and policies are informed by broad ethical values. Fundamental rights to dignity and respect enshrined in the HRA can be translated into practice which informs everyday life. If the values in the Act were incorporated into training programmes (much as equalities legislation has been), then we should no longer read about old ladies being tied to toilet seats in care homes or people with learning difficulties refused permission to freely associate in day centres.

In its early days, the ministers responsible for piloting the HRA through Parliament were keen to emphasise its moral content. According to former Home Secretary Jack Straw, "deciding day to day

legal questions on the basis of such fundamental ethical principles, set out in statute, is a new departure."[35] Or as Lord Irvine, the Lord Chancellor, put it, the HRA "will create a more explicitly moral approach to decisions and decision-making."[36]

Human Rights as British values?
The Human Rights Act may be distilled from a set of ethical values but do these have a nationality? Could the Act be fairly described, to quote Michael Wills, then minister with responsibility for human rights in the Lord Chancellors Department, as "a statutory expression of historic British freedoms and rights"?[37]

It is fair to say that many ECHR rights were already well recognised in the UK long before the HRA was a gleam in ministers' eyes. Indeed the origin of some of these rights, like the right to a fair trial or prohibitions on inhuman and degrading treatment, can be directly traced back to these shores.[38] Other entitlements, on the other hand, like the right to a private life and to dignity were not fully recognised in English law before the HRA came into force.

However, despite the common boast that Britain is a country which cherishes civil liberties, freedom and the rule of law in the absence of any written charter or statement of rights, these values have competed with other more enduring and regressive takes on 'being British'. The symbols which have emerged down the ages as representative of the UK – in particular the Monarchy, the Anglican church and the Empire[39] – do not unambiguously reflect "historic British freedoms and rights,"[40] to say the least. Whilst the loss of empire, for example, is still routinely portrayed as a trauma that the UK has only just recovered from, the reality is that for about a third of the population of London this loss was their liberation. Learning English and speaking a common language will not alter the different meaning attached to such emblems by various sections of the community.

The reality is that traditional British ideals of liberty and freedom have

both contributed to, and developed from, evolving international human rights norms. The English common law failed to give any recognition to the principle of non-discrimination, for example, save to require inn-keepers to accept all travellers who were "in a reasonably fit condition to be received."[41] It took a series of Acts in the 1960s and 1970s to remedy this, 20 or more years after the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights established that protection from discrimination was a fundamental human right.

What is the source of human rights values?

The values expressed in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), incorporated into our law through the HRA, are directly drawn from the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). It is often said that British lawyers had a significant role in drafting the ECHR. This is true but, as the preamble to the European Convention recognises, its broad principles were already established by the UDHR.

The impetus for drafting the Universal Declaration was the devastation of the Second World War. The purpose was to set down a group of common norms that spoke to people of all religions and creeds, as well as none. The consequence was a document drafted by men and women from different communities around the globe drawing upon all major religions and philosophical viewpoints.[42] The values it upholds therefore cannot be claimed by an exclusive national or social group.

The UDHR represented the start of a new phase in human rights thinking. It established the principle that all human beings are bestowed with inalienable rights from the moment of their birth. This was not as a result of their nationality or citizenship, but as a consequence of their common humanity. Whilst it is not a legally binding treaty as such, it has exerted a huge moral and legal influence around the world. The rights within it have formed the basis of all the subsequent international and regional human rights treaties. Its provisions have been cited or used so often over the years that it is generally accepted

that parts of it are now 'customary international law' and hence binding on states.

The UDHR is essentially an ethical document which underlines the values of dignity, equality and community as well as liberty and justice. It sets down a minimum vision of how human beings could live with each other in peace and mutual respect. Mary Robinson, the former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and former President of Ireland, presents the Declaration in these terms: "My vision of the Universal Declaration strays beyond its legal and political significance… I would venture to suggest that it has become an elevating force on the events of our world because it can be seen to embody the legal, moral and philosophical beliefs held true by all peoples and because it applies to all."[43]

This has meant that, whilst the claim that the UDHR equally reflects the values of all communities in the world is hotly – and quite reasonably – contested, it has proved possible for different religious leaders to square human rights discourse with their own beliefs.[44] The renowned South African Bishop, Desmond Tutu, and Hossein Mehrpour, Professor of Law in Teheran and an Islamic scholar, are both part of this tradition. Mehrpour writes: "apart from that aspect of religion which consists of the important duty to spiritually guide and instruct, there are no serious differences or contradictions in their social aspects and application between religious teachings and human rights."[45]

Given these influences, it is unsurprising that the post-war rights vision does not begin and end with isolated individuals pitted against mighty states; individuals who, in the words of the French Declaration of Rights, should have the power "to do whatever is not injurious to others." Instead it is a vision in which the 'personality' of individuals, can only effectively develop in 'community' with others to whom we all owe 'duties'.[46] This is an approach to rights established in the very first article of the UDHR which reads almost like a commandment, "All human beings…should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood." This emphasis on the social nature of human beings and

their responsibilities to others and the wider community reflected the beliefs of many of the people who helped draft it. But as importantly, it also stemmed from the task the drafters set themselves. This was not just to 'set the people free' but to find common values in which the liberties of individuals would be respected without weakening the bonds of the wider community, so essential for human development. It was a different understanding of the concept of freedom than the West had earlier embraced.

Values to aid social cohesion?

This attempt at synthesising communitarian themes with a more classically liberal approach to protecting individual rights, is also reflected in the European Convention on Human Rights, and hence the HRA. Some ECHR rights are expressed in absolute terms, like the right not to be subject to torture or slavery. But most of the rights are qualified or limited in some way, usually to protect the rights of others or the needs of the community as a whole. Freedom of expression, for example, "since it carries with it duties and responsibilities," may carry restrictions that are "necessary in a democratic society."[47]

Flowing from such injunctions, there is an inherent search in virtually the whole of the ECHR to find a fair balance between the protection of individual rights and the interests of the wider community.[48] But it is not a 'balance' in the sense that fundamental rights and its limitations are given equal weight, what is called proportionality. The case law developed by the European Court of Human Rights has established that the principle of proportionality is pivotal to finding this balance. This concept is as central to human rights thinking as any of the substantive rights. It means that any limitation on individual rights must not only be necessary to pursue a legitimate goal, like protecting society from a public health scare, but must not go beyond what is strictly necessary to achieve that purpose. Encouraging and persuading parents to vaccinate their children against contagious diseases, yes. Imprisoning them for not doing so, no.

It is misguided to understand the Human Rights Act, therefore, purely as a legal document designed to protect individual liberties from abuse by the state, regardless of the implications for society as a collective entity. Although it is very important to be clear that human rights are not contingent on responsible behaviour, they can be legitimately limited, in a proportionate way, to protect the fundamental rights of others.

Conclusion

Would David Blunkett have inspired the same reaction to his statements about British citizenship if he had suggested that human rights values provide the core of what can unite the diverse communities which make up the UK? If, as the Cantle report suggests, "many of the present problems" seem to owe a great deal to the failure "to communicate and agree a set of clear values that can govern behaviour"[49] is it helpful for anyone to suggest or imply that it is specifically British values that we all need to learn?

Cantle, in fact, resisted the temptation to set out what these core values might be. The White Paper, as we have seen, suggests that the 1998 Human Rights Act could provide a key source but omits to expand on what its values are. This is a shame given the common assumption that human rights is a Western creed which worships at the altar of individualism at the expense of the wider community and as such is incompatible with religious perspectives, in particular Islam.

In reality, as shown above, post-war (or 'second wave') human rights thinking was much richer than this. Among other creeds, it drew on religious Islam – as well as secular liberalism – and emphasised the needs of the wider community (as distinct from the state) as well as the rights of individuals. Its origins and authors should not be confused with what Yasmin Alibhai-Brown calls "the founding fathers of liberalism" who "believed utterly in the superiority of European societies."[50]

This does not make human rights an uncontestable set of values. Of course not. The very fact that it is not a religious faith means that its

underlying principles must be open to challenge and will never be universally accepted. But the vision of human dignity, equality and community inherent in 'second wave' rights thinking is universally *applicable* and in this sense speaks to those of all faiths and creeds and those of none.

Other countries have understood this long ago. Speaking at a conference organised by the Foreign Policy Centre in January 2002, Rosaline Frith, Director General of the Integration Branch of Citizenship and Immigration in Canada, spoke of the role of the Canadian Charter of Rights in "reaffirmation ceremonies", through which citizens express their "commitment to Canada." Whatever the benefits or otherwise of such a ceremony, Frith emphasised that the 1960 Bill of Rights and the 1982 Charter of Rights were "a crucial element in moving towards a non-racial legal system."[51]

Gurbux Singh, former Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality, saw citizenship "as building a Britain of belonging, based on rights and responsibilities." These "must be underpinned by key common values" which are an essential companion to diversity "making it easier to deal with our points of disagreement" when they arise. "Establishing these common core values is the first step in the journey to a reimagined Britain where all will belong."[52] The first leg on this journey has already begun. Whilst there can, of course, be other candidates, the HRA provides those conflict-resolving, core values that Singh sought for our diverse society. On the basis of its norms, interference by the state in the choice of marriage partners of British citizens is a breach of their fundamental rights.[53] Conversely the government is required, under human rights law, to protect individuals from abuses by other individuals if their fundamental rights are grossly breached.[54] Recent steps by the Home Office to crack down on forced marriages, carried out against the will of either of the parties, is fully in line with this approach.

The human rights vision, of course, extends beyond citizenship. In legal terms, the HRA applies to everyone in this country, from the moment they step off the plane. To propose that the values in our bill of rights can provide the basis of what unites us is not to say they only apply to British citizens. On the contrary, it is to suggest that these values are inclusive in their scope and inclusive in their origin. It is to argue that as much as we can trace them to historic British ideas of individual liberty we can also link them to the contribution that Communitarianism, Confucionism and, for that matter, Socialism has made to post-war human rights thinking. It is to say that what we need to unite us is not a set of values which show newcomers to our 'home' how 'we' live – whoever 'we' may be – but a set of common norms that underline our common humanity, however long we have lived here and whatever faiths and philosophies we may hold. It is to say that through the HRA we have now incorporated some of those values into our law.

It is our bill of rights which can provide the legally enforceable 'bottom line' of unacceptable practices that many commentators seek. Practices like genital mutilation – or for that matter internet child pornography – violate universal human rights norms. That is why they should be outlawed; not because they are an offense to specifically British customs.

A bit of humility, in other words, would not come amiss in the search for social cohesion. But then that was what the story the Tower of Babel tried to teach us, long before the word 'tower' became indelibly associated with a particular date.

Francesca Klug is Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Human Rights, LSE

[1] *Independent on Sunday,* 9.12.01.
[2] *Independent on Sunday,* 9.12.01.
[3] See John Lloyd, 'Poor Whites,' *Prospect,* June 2000. See also John Lloyd 'The End of Multiculturalism,' *New Statesman,* 27.5.02.
[4] Ted Cantle, *Community Cohesion, A Report of the Independent Review Team,* (Home Office: December 2001), p10.
[5] *Secure Borders, Safe Haven: Integration with Diversity in Modern Britain,* White Paper CM 5387, 2002, p18.
[6] Quoted in *The Independent,* 8.2.02.

7   *Sun,* 11.12.01.

8   Quoted in the *Financial Times,* 11.12.01.

9   *Mail on Sunday,* 10.2.02.

10 Notably from Jagdeesh Singh of the Sikh Community Action Network and Manzoor Moghal of the Muslim Council of Britain.

11 A Poll for BBC News published in May 2002 found that 75% of black people and 68% of Asians agreed with the Home Secretary's plans for English and citizenship classes for new citizens.

12 *Guardian,* 8.2.02. See also letters by Faz Hakim, former race relations advisor to the PM, *Guardian,* 12.12.01. Simon Woolley of Operation Black Vote et al, *Independent,* 11.12.01.

13 *Independent,* 10.12.01.

14 *Independent*, 16.12.01. For a discussion of these issues see Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, *After Multiculturalism,* (Foreign Policy Centre: 2000). See also Runnymede Trust, *Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain,* 2000.

15 White Paper, op cit, p10.

16 In a landmark speech on "Race, Equality and Community Cohesion" to the Social Market Foundation on 26.6.02, David Blunkett remarked that "Britain has changed significantly in the last the thirty years. We have become a diverse and tolerant society, enriched by immigration…"

17 Ibid.

18 White Paper, op cit, p29.

19 Leader, *Evening Standard,* 12.12.01.

20 Leader, *Daily Star,* 10.12.01.

21 White Paper, p10.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid, p29.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid, p34.

26 Ibid, p3

27 Often these are judgments by the European Court of Human Rights rather than the domestic courts – for example on the respective roles of judges and Home Secretaries in determining the length of sentence of life prisoners. The press has notably been less hostile to the HRA since it has discovered that it has much to gain itself from its free expression provisions which were not explicitly set down in statute before the HRA.

28 Ronald Dworkin, 'The Moral Reading of the Constitution,' *New York Review,* 21.3.96.

29 This gradualism is not exclusive to the UK, the New Zealand Bill of Rights was introduced in 1990 in not dissimilar circumstances to the UK.

30 See Francesca Klug, '*Values for a Godless Age: The Story of the UK's New Bill of Rights',* (Penguin: 2000) for a full description of the events leading up to the implementation of the 1998 Human Rights Act.

31 Lord Browne-Wilkisnon, 'The Impact on Judicial Reasoning' in *The Impact of the Human Rights Bill on English Law,* Basil Markesinis (ed), (Clarendon: 1998), pp22-23.

32 *Kjeldsen Busk Madson and Peterson v Belgium* (1979-80) 1 EHRR 711, para 53.

33 *Handyside v UK* (1979-80) 1 EHRR 737.

34 *Young, James & Webster v UK* (1982) 4 EHRR 38, para 63.

35 Jack Straw, "Building a Human Rights Culture," Address to Civil Service College Seminar, 9.12.99.

36 "The Development of Human Rights in Britain under an Incorporated Convention on Human Rights," Tom Sergant Memorial Lecture, *Public Law,* Summer 1998, p236.

37 Quoted in an interview with Rachel Sylvester, *Daily Telegraph,* 15.12.01.

38 From the Magna Carta and the 1688 Bill of Rights respectively.

39 It is extraordinary how enduring these symbols are. When the Queen Mother died in April 2002, for example, commentators routinely referred to her as 'the last Empress of India' without any reflection on what that title might evoke for British citizens of Indian ancestry.

40 Michael Wills, op cit.

41 *Constantine v Imperial Hotels Ltd,* 1944. The 'basic interests' prioritised by the Common law prior to the HRA were personal liberty, due process, property rights, reputation and free expression. See Klug, F., Starmer, K., and Weir, S. '*The Three Pillars of Liberty: Political Rights and Freedoms in the UK',* (Routledge: 1996).

42 Including Islam, Socialism and Confucianism. However, as a result of colonialism sub-Saharan Africa, in particular, was massively underrepresented.

43 Mary Robinson, 'The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the international keystone of human dignity,' in *Reflections on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*: A 50th Anniversary Anthology, (Kluwer: 1998).

44 See Bhikhu Parekh, 'Non-ethnocentric universalism' in *Human Rights in Global Politics,* (Cambridge University Press: 1999); Mahmood Monshipouri, 'The Muslim World Half a Century after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Progress and Obstacles, *Netherlands Quarterly of Human Rights,* Vol 16 No3 , September 1998; and Michael. J. Perry 'Are human rights universal? The relativist challenge and related matters' in *Human Rights Quarterly,* 19 (1997) pp461-509.

45 Hossein Mehrpour, 'Human Rights in the Universal Declaration and the Religious Perspective,' in *Reflections on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,* op cit.

46 UDHR, Article 29 (1) reads: "Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible."

47 ECHR Article 10.

48 See, for example, the case of *Soering v UK* (1989) 11 EHRR 439, para 89.

49 op cit p18.

50 *Independent,* 15.10.01.

51 Quotes from *Conference Speech,* Managing Migration Conference, Canada House, 15.01.02.

52 Gurbux Singh *Britain Beyond the Rhetoric: Delivering Equality and Social Justice,* Keynote Speech, 16.5.02.

53 Article 12 of the ECHR guarantees men and women a "right to marry." Article 8 guarantees "respect for private and family life."

54 For example, *X & Y v Netherlands, (1986) 8* EHRR 235; *A v UK* (1999) 27 EHRR 611.

5   Rediscovering Internationalism

David Lammy*

To people of my generation, multiculturalism and internationalism mean more than just samosas, saris and steel drums. They are not abstract concepts that need to be artificially 'celebrated'. Rather they are lived through our everyday experiences – the friends we make, the food we eat, the music we listen to. But we continue to struggle to make sense of an increasingly complex and uncertain world, and to come to a new understanding of Britain's place within it, it is too easy to forget the unique and powerful resource which lies on our doorstep: our people. Britain's multi-ethnic society represents a rich web of living links, binding us to people and places across the globe.

This chapter begins to sketch out a vision for how we might understand and exploit this untapped resource in practical ways: as a source of comparative advantage in a global economy which depends upon attracting the very best talent and skills; as a tool for learning about how to tackle some of our most pressing social problems; most importantly, as a means to 'live the brand' which our values represent.

Young people, globalisation and conflict

Unlike our parents, and our parents' parents, my generation's touchstones have not, for the most part, been based on the imminent threat of conflict. We have not had to come to terms with the senseless slaughter of the Somme, or the extermination of millions in Nazi gas chambers. We have had no Cuban Missile Crisis, no Vietnam. Our formative experiences have not been of war and despair but of hope and peace. We have grown up against a backdrop of Glasnost and Perestroika, national self-determination for millions in the former Eastern Bloc, the end of apartheid in South Africa, real prospects for peace in Northern Ireland. We have seen the international community's potential to be a powerful force for good in Kosovo. We have almost

forgotten about the peace and nuclear disarmament movements which so galvanised our parents. That space has been filled by causes like Third World poverty and the environment: Live Aid occupies a unique place in our collective consciousness; Comic Relief has become a national institution; organisations like Greenpeace and the Trade Justice Movement have a popularity amongst young people that mainstream political parties can currently only aspire to.

My generation is also fortunate because so much of the world is now within our reach. Travelling around the developing world has become a realistic, affordable and popular choice amongst young people. The Internet and new communications technologies allows youngsters to build friendships across the globe, exchange stories and develop a cultural literacy that they could never learn from a textbook. Most importantly, especially in my own constituency of Tottenham, globalisation has brought the world to our doorstep, with friends and neighbours from all over Europe, Asia and Africa. We don't need to go and discover the world because the world has come to us.

But when terrorists attacked the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on 11 September, they reminded my generation, in the most horrific terms, that however global we may feel and however comfortable we are with the blurring of our cultural demarcations, our way of life is not invulnerable to the ruthlessly destabilising forces which global social and economic change has unleashed. I heard one commentator suggest that the next generation was having to face up to the sins of our fathers and mothers. We have certainly allowed a serious disjuncture to develop between our willingness to enjoy the benefits of globalisation, and our capacity to perceive, understand and address its most brutal consequences.

Seizing the opportunities

Young Britons are certainly not alone in feeling this disjuncture. But perhaps their country's history means they are peculiarly well-placed to bridge it. The formal political ties of Empire may have disintegrated, but they have been replaced by something stronger – a bond of people.

With the onset of mass migration from its former colonies after 1945 Britain has developed into a multi-ethnic society. No longer are we tied to different parts of the world simply by naked self-interest or by some notion of moral duty (whether the 'white man's burden' or post-imperial guilt).We are tied by our fellow Britons, by their cultural histories and traditions, by their multinational networks of family and friends. As it looks forward to a new century – a century in which socio-economic, demographic and technological changes are likely to transform beyond recognition the strategic context of world affairs and our understanding of our role within them – Britain must capitalise on the opportunities which membership of this unique global network affords.

Take, first of all, the economy. Increasingly, the key driver of growth will not be ever more sophisticated technology but rather the creative application of that technology by highly-skilled workers. Prosperity will therefore depend on being able to draw upon the widest possible pool of human capital. It is striking that in the 19th century, many young Britons headed to India to take up commissions in the army or jobs in the East India Company, hoping to use the know-how they had acquired thanks to British education to make their name or their fortune. Today that flow of people has reversed – increasingly we are trying to attract software engineers, doctors and scientists to Britain from India and elsewhere in order to benefit from their expertise. But prosperity will also depend on the ability to identify commercial opportunities wherever they occur in the world, and to build the local partnerships needed to benefit from them. Britain's ethnic minority communities are uniquely well placed to gather and exploit this intelligence.

Many of our most intractable social problems, too, will not be resolved without understanding and addressing the international context that structures them. It is at the international level that the most preventative and most sustainable solutions are to be found. Take drug trafficking. Before the war in Afghanistan 90% of heroin entering the UK was produced and sold by the Taliban in order to bankroll its repressive regime. Every pound deployed in regenerating Afghanistan and

tackling its dependence on opium production is probably a pound saved in fighting drug-related crime in Britain. But unlike putting more bobbies on the beat, that requires the development of effective relationships with local stakeholders – surely a job well-suited to Afghan men and women already resident in Britain. Alternatively, consider the dearth of useful intelligence data hampering attempts to crack down on international terrorist and crime organisations. On the one hand, the language skills and practical local know-how of new arrivals, particularly asylum seekers, are a potentially invaluable asset not being properly harnessed. On the other hand, grooming a new generation of intelligence agents with the capacity to infiltrate these groups will prove very difficult so long as relations between the police and ethnic minority communities remain so strained.

But if the international context is part of the problem, it can also be part of the solution. Too often international development is seen not as an exercise in mutual learning but as a one-way process of knowledge transfer from Western 'experts' to developing countries. An enormous amount of knowledge and experience is simply not captured by existing processes and institutions. I am often struck on visits abroad or when talking to NGOs engaged in projects abroad not just by the quality and creativity of the work that goes on but by the many valuable lessons and insights that could be applied to efforts to tackle our own 'wicked issues'. There is much we in the West could learn from some of these exciting and innovative mass literacy strategies, citizen participation programmes, conflict resolution and community-building projects, but only if we can foster and sustain the networks needed to facilitate this knowledge exchange.

A perspective from Tottenham
There can be few constituencies in Britain where these issues are as pertinent as they are in Tottenham. Though we are small in number, we have a world reach. The official indices will tell the story of an area at rock bottom – with rates of crime, drug use, unemployment, school exclusions, and educational failure far worse than the national average.

And yet there is a wealth of talent and energy in Tottenham. After all, 166 languages are spoken in my constituency. Some of my constituents speak six different languages, having lived in three or four African countries and two or three European ones before finally settling in Tottenham. They might not have a certificate to prove it, but these are marketable skills; if nothing else, they represent sure-fire proof of a passion and capacity for learning. And yet all too often, they are still being prevented from using these skills or learning new ones. There are some examples of best practice in this area, including the Refugee Council's Training Section where caseworkers actively work to map the knowledge and skill levels of refugees and asylum seekers to appropriate training or employment opportunities. However, the approach is still piecemeal and does not fully exploit the potential of new arrivals.

Like many London MPs, I receive many enquiries relating to asylum, immigration, nationality and naturalisation. These enquiries give me a privileged insight into the real stories of newcomers to Britain. Contrary to tabloid newspaper reports, I have learnt that the enormous relief of those granted political asylum, for example, has nothing to do with having cheated the system or slipped through our immigration net; it is that, perhaps for the first time in their lives, someone has recognised and told them in uncompromising terms that what they have suffered is wrong and that they will not tolerate it happening to them again. Equally, when a constituent asks me about naturalisation, it tends, in my experience, to have nothing to do with increased access to welfare benefits. In fact, it is far more common for them to report their frustration at not having been granted permission to work. But beyond this superficial level, there often lies a deeper, less tangible desire, a desire to belong and to contribute, to be a part of something bigger – a recognition, which we too often lose sight of ourselves, that to be British is a special privilege.

Conclusion
Britain has never really developed a shared narrative for why we should not only tolerate diversity, but welcome and encourage it. For some people, 11 September has confirmed their suspicion that no such narrative exists, that the values of different groups are irreconcilable and that we should direct our energies to gearing up for a new century of conflict along cultural and religious lines. My problem with that argument is not only that it is intellectually crude but that it is not borne out by my experience of living amongst and representing the people of Tottenham. The people I represent are passionate about Britain. Some of them travelled thousands of miles to get here and try to feel as British as they can, often despite the system rather than because of it. But they also retain a very clear sense of their individual identity, traditions and culture. Of course we have our fair share of problems, but I see no 'clash of civilisations' here.

Tottenham captures in microcosm the challenges that the whole country – and indeed the whole world – increasingly has to confront. That means moving beyond the multicultural policies of the 1970s which, despite their successes, divided the nation into even smaller tribes and allowed a multitude of old sins to be protected by the shield of cultural relativism. In its place must be a new emphasis on what unites us: our shared problems and the importance of acting together to tackle them; shared goals for our families and communities and the ways in which we can help each other to attain them. But it also means moving beyond the old assimilationist argument that everyone who lives in Britain must behave in the same way and have the same values. What a boring place that would be! The truth is, that there is no one British way of life or one set of British values. We do not have, nor are we able to create overnight, some single national identity to which all Britons can relate, because national identity is much too complex and too enmeshed in the overlapping and competing sets of values, beliefs and stories which go to make up our own individual identity. What we can do, however, is to create the kind of political cultures and institutions – right from the bottom up – which enable us all to feel part of some wider whole; in which conflicts over values can be mediated through participation, negotiation and dialogue; which, ultimately, will help us to forge an ever more coherent, but nonetheless dynamic sense of what really matters to us and defines us as a nation.

For me, this is the big story of 11 September. A whole generation was in danger of switching off from mainstream politics because they could not understand how it related to their day-to-day experiences or how it could help them choose how to live their life in a complex, globalised world. But Adam Smith's great insight was to recognise that what looks incredibly complex and intractable at a macro-level really comes down to the simple choices of individuals in their interactions with their neighbours and their communities. For some people, the idea that a number of young British Muslims were prepared to risk their lives fighting fellow Britons in Afghanistan has shattered their faith in the future of multi-ethnic Britain. For me, however, it does not suggest some intractable conflict over values and beliefs but rather a shameful failure on the part of their local communities, and Britain as a community of communities, to give voice to their concerns and frustrations. It is a damning indictment of our representative structures when a young British person believes it is better to pursue change with a Kalashnikov than a voting paper.

There is an old Chinese curse: "may you live in interesting times". But as we face up to the challenges of these 'interesting' times, we should take comfort in the extraordinary comparative advantage which our people and our history give us. They are an invaluable resource in helping us to understand and exploit the dense interconnections between Britain and the rest of the world. They present us with a unique opportunity to maintain and extend a leading role in world affairs. They enable us to 'live the brand' which our values collectively represent and which we are trying to promote in others – diversity, understanding, tolerance and respect. Above all, they encourage us to lay open our own beliefs to scrutiny and amendment, and to ask others to do the same.

David Lammy is Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department of Health and MP for Tottenham

*This paper was written before David Lammy became a Minister in May 2002

PART III

WHO IS LEFT OUT?

6 The Excluded Majority: What about the English?

Yasmin Alibhai-Brown

Since May, I've been asked to speak at seven events on the apparently endlessly gripping subject of The British Identity. No. 8 is next week. We discuss the concept in elevated terms: hybridity, post-colonialism, post-modernism, diversity, new formations, new ethnicities. We engage with the politics of difference, of identity, we debate the Irish renaissance and globalisation. But we don't mention the English, except as the chief culprits of world exploitation.

These discussions are intended to help us break from an ignoble past, to cut the British identity from its dishonourable English roots and to free the world we now inhabit so that we can forge a new nation. Les Back, author of *New Ethnicities and Urban Culture*, exemplifies the exhilaration of this position. Pitting himself against the old fogeys, those who relate to the withering popularity of T S Eliot's vision of English culture, Back believes that "young people in British cities are embracing diversity in a seemingly inexhaustible combination of form and content, in ways which make Britishness or Englishness almost meaningless."

The problem is that the more the metropolitan elite assumes these concepts are meaningless, the more meaningful they become. This is especially true as numerous forces unite to create new tensions and desires, as evidenced in the riots in Northern towns last summer.

Melanie Phillips once accurately reflected this in the New Statesman: "For the Scots, the Welsh and…the Irish, European supranationalism offers a potential escape route from their already hateful domination by England. But England is now threatened by a pincer movement."

What makes it even more difficult for the English, is the fact that everyone else is busy building up tribal allegiances and claiming credibility by exaggerating the 'crimes' of the English. The Scots not only busy themselves with talk of political restructuring, but declare themselves victims of colonialism, conveniently forgetting how many of them strutted around the colonies barking orders at the natives and relishing their sundowners. The idea that Scottish nationalism may too produce excluding, mean and dangerous influences is little addressed within the devolution process. Institutions creating the young, brand new, rediscovered Scottish nation, locked as it is in an ethnic redefinition of itself, found no space for the visible communities. Black Britons were relegated to second-class status. Ditto Wales.

In the words of Linda Grant: "Much of the desire for self-government derives from a deep-seated antipathy to the English and a constant harking back to historical defeats…a bunch of racial essentialists who still want to give their notional idea of the English a good kicking."

This is not only unfair but unwise. Black, Asian and Irish Britons are urged constantly to think obsessively about their ancestral and religious identities. But when the English start wondering about themselves they find no understanding. At one of these recent conferences the audience (of spirited lefties) was utterly disconcerted to hear myself and another Black speaker promoting the idea of English identity. A number of them whispered to me afterwards that nobody would take me seriously as a Black activist if I started espousing the cause of the undeserving English. Those people don't understand the widespread mood of despair or that they cannot simply vaporise this away by theorising about complex nationalisms and hybridity.

The irony is that black and Asian Britons today feel more deeply about their British identity than any of the indigenous groups. Once this identity represented humiliation. We were never accepted as of this island. Indeed, I am still asked every week where I come from and

why I speak such good English. But in the last few years we have embraced and transformed Britishness and by doing so redefined the British identity. Now Scottish, Welsh and English nationalists want to relegate us to those lesser beings who have no ancestral connections to this land.

Such preoccupations are not restricted simply to the ignorant or xenophobic. Successful, affluent, urbane city folk are as likely these days to lament the end of Englishness. A few years ago, two detailed nationwide studies commissioned by the Institute for Public Policy Research illustrated this clearly.[1] The researchers concluded that English people across all classes "have deep anxieties about the loss of white British identity as we go into the next century and ever further into Europe". Often this is expressed as painful reminiscence. In the surveys, professional Englishmen were saying things such as "The great days are gone forever", or "This country is an embarrassment; we used to rule the world, now look at us". Such unhealthy pessimism and nostalgia are surely dangerous for any society.

Perhaps this was the spirit that the hapless Labour bulldog, used in the 1997 election, was trying to capture. In recent years we have also seen a number of books boarding this subject as delicately as possible. Titles such as *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the 18th century* by John Brewer for example, *The English* by Jeremy Paxman or *Anyone for England?* by Clive Aslet, the editor of Country Life (unfortunately the bulldog appears here too, on the cover). The easiest thing in the world would be to deride these attempts at finding something to replace lost kingdoms and dreams. The more challenging task is that of deconstruction and reconstruction, so that the English can finally come out and take their place among equals.

Eight years ago Philip Dodd argued that as the British national identity became an increasingly contested area, an opportunity had arisen to "flush out the English – for among the nations of this island it is they who have been most reluctant to come face to face."[2] He thought that

this would be traumatic because for centuries the English had never had to think of themselves in any self-conscious way.

The trauma, if there is one, is that there is no safe and respectable way as yet of asserting this identity. Most anti-racists (myself included) and the British National Party, inconceivable bedfellows, are among those responsible for this. For far too long it has not been possible for English people to air either their sense of dislocation or their heritage in any positive way. Thoughtful English people fear that in doing so, they might be seen as neo-Powellites or football hooligans wearing Union Jack underpants and murderous tattoos. Worse, they might show themselves to be parochial, not part of the thrusting, transnational, modern universe.

Ironically, as thinkers such as Michael Ignatieff and others have recognised, globalisation itself generates rather than suppresses cravings for ethnic affiliation. Bhikhu Parekh said once that "globalisation is a paradoxical phenomenon. On the one hand it leads to the homogenisation of ideas, institutions and forms of life (but) it also provokes fears about the loss of a society's identity and stimulates resistance and rediscovery or invention of native traditions." We know also that groups within nations do need to feel secure in themselves before they can accept others. This is surely why Ireland has embraced the European Union with such enthusiasm.

But the restive English (remember Defoe who said "From this amphibious ill born mob began, that vain, ill-natured thing, the Englishman") on whose lands most of us live, have yet to develop this confident post-imperial cultural identity. Locked as they are somewhere between embarrassment and guilt, multiculturalism, whether in education or the arts, has excluded them as a specific group to be catered for. Any attempt even to discuss this has been denounced as racist, often because the instigators came from the new Right. The national curriculum may, it is true, be focused on British history and literature; Christianity may be the most recognised religion in schools

and Christmas still the event that overshadows all other religious festivals. But teaching English children to be aware of themselves and their ancestral heritage, without the woeful arrogance that used to accompany that process, is something that eludes us.

This is especially ironic at a time when we are, thankfully, moving away from the idea of competition between cultures to the view that we should value contributions to world development. In that context, England has much to celebrate: Shakespeare, Dickens, parliamentary democracy, the architectural beauty of old London, English political philosophers, the English philanthropic tradition, the welfare state, scientific developments since the industrial revolution, some aspects of the sixties cultural revolution, football, brilliant humorists and much more. Why is it wrong for English children to take pride in these achievements, especially as they are becoming better educated about Arabic contributions to maths and astronomy, for example?

The various reports about the 2001 riots in Northern towns highlighted the feeling among some deprived white communities that their needs were being sacrificed to ethnic minorities. This point was made even more powerfully fifteen years ago, when a massive enquiry, led by Ian Macdonald QC, into the murder of a young Bangladeshi boy in Manchester concluded: "One gets the sense of white working class parents, who have little or no basis on which to root their own identity and whose education has given them little or no conception of the value of their own experience as English working class and who therefore react angrily and resentfully to a school which caters directly for the needs and preferences Asian students." The lessons of this sensible development were ignored and the authors vilified by many who refused to see the importance of their arguments.

A seriously under-reported study carried out among young white teenagers in Greenwich,[3] including racists such as the ones who killed Stephen Lawrence, has come to similar conclusions. The author, Roger Hewitt, found that many of these hard young thugs hated blacks at least

in part because of school experiences where being black made you blameless and where they grew to resent "the celebration of cultural variety (which) seems to include all cultures that are not their own."

In a key section where the young kids are quoted, many of them say things such as "like some kid in our class, he's got the Union Jack belt…and it's got a 'British Bulldog' on it and all the teachers are saying 'I want that off.' Yeah and all the niggers wear like Jamaican coats…All the teachers are scared of the blacks. If we wanna support our country it's up to us. If we wanna show that we're proud to be British, just like he's wearing that Jamaican coat."

Unless this is changed, says Hewitt, young white kids will be driven in greater numbers to join extremist parties, which are always waiting to recruit the disenchanted. This is not to make excuses for the racist acts committed by some repulsive people, it is to get to grips with the perils of not confronting the subject.

But encouraging the English to be English is essential for other more subtle reasons. It may help to get us over the sense that so many now feel, of being locked in an inescapable history. All sides suffocate beneath this burden. Encouraging people to feel pride in the affirmative aspects of their history makes it easier to get them to accept the wrongs that have been carried out in the name of heritage. If we start to tackle Englishness, we may find a way of dealing with the difficult situations that are arising around the country; white middle-class flight into the safe English arms of Norfolk and Somerset; the surge among secular parents to send their children to Church of England schools, the foolish policies that deny mixed-race children their English background.

What has been unleashed cannot be contained again but it can be circumscribed and made less appealing by the invention of a better, broader identity, that of New Britishness. Stuart Hall says that cultural identities are "not an essence, but a positioning." The big project for the next century is to create a multi-ethnic British identity which is

inclusive and not exclusive; progressive and not shrouded in pathos and longings for the past. This cannot be done unless the English are brought in from the cold.

Yasmin Alibhai-Brown is a Senior Researcher at The Foreign Policy Centre

[1] Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, *'True Colours: Public Attitude to Multiculturalism and the Role of the Government'*, (The Institute for Public Policy Research: 1999).

[2] Philip Dodd, *'The Battle Over Britain'*, (Demos: 1995).

[3] Roger Hewitt, *'Routes of Racism: the Social Basis of Racist Action'*, (Trentham Books: 1996).

7   The Excluded Minority: British Muslim Identity After 11 September

Ziauddin Sardar

Being a Muslim in the post-modern world is painful enough. But after 'Nine Eleven' it has become a truly traumatic affair. In the US, Muslims are today forced into two set categories – 'terrorist' or 'apologist'. In the UK many Muslims find themselves unable to relate to existing labels, most of which are constrained by out of date and simplistic definitions related to race and class. This chapter poses a challenge for British identity to shed these associations and make it possible for Muslims to relate to Britain.

The challenge for the UK
The post Nine Eleven USA recognises only two kinds of Muslims: the terrorist (who has declared war on the West) and the apologetic (who claims to be liberal and defends Islam as a peaceful religion). Unfortunately, the distinction between the two is not really clear. To begin with they both tend to look very similar: Arab or South Asian appearance, the moustache and de règle beard, the beatific smile and the odd turban makes them almost indistinguishable. Worse: with beard and turban, they also look like Sikhs; and when not attired with regulation beard and turban, they resemble old-fashioned, un-reconstituted Marxists and Maoists. This must explain why the first victims of revenge attacks in New York immediately after 11 September were Sikhs; and why someone with Tariq Ali's credentials was arrested as a potential terrorist in a European airport.

Muslims living in the US have very little option. The way America has wrapped itself in the flag after 11 September, as demonstrated so well in the obnoxious display of patriotism at the Super Bowl and the Winter Olympics, does not allow a Muslim-American any space to be anything

but a binary category. It is not possible for a Muslim, for example, to be an American and not believe what purports to be 'American values'; it is not possible for an American Muslim to be against terrorism as well as against American action in Afghanistan; and it is certainly not possible for Muslims to be dissenters within America.

In Britain the challenge is somewhat different. While not constrained by this bi-polarity, Muslims find it hard to fit in because all British notions of identity are still firmly rooted in old concepts, such as race and class. This makes it seriously difficult for us to see religion as a badge of identity, leading to a series of simplistic associations.

Take for example the label of 'Asians', which is used to identify most Muslims living in the UK. Calling Muslims 'Asians' is ridiculous because Muslims consciously reject all racial and geographical categories – as a Universalist worldview, Islam seeks global, Universalist notions of identity. Furthermore, Asia is not a race or identity, it's a continent. Even in Asia, where more than half the world's population lives, no one calls himself or herself 'Asian'. If you are not Chinese or Malaysian, then you are an Afghan or a Punjabi. Moreover, the meaning of the term changes from place to place. In the US, the Asian label is attached to Koreans, Filipinos and Chinese. In Britain, we do not use the term Asian to describe our substantial communities of Turks, Iranians or Indonesians, even though these countries are in Asia. So, at best the label 'Asian' is meaningless. At worst, it is a denial of the fact that someone born and bred in Britain is actually British, full stop.

We tend to label Muslims as 'Asians' because, in the same way as race and class, this label suggests amorphous yet containable difference. 'Muslim', on the other hand, describes a specific and volatile difference. In a world where few actually admit to believing in anything, people who overtly demonstrate their beliefs at every opportunity stand out as totally weird. For many, Muslims are not simply a weird brand of believers, they are rampant, dangerous and impenetrably different believers. It is therefore hardly surprising that all those young people constantly described as

'Asians' have problems finding a suitable location for their loyalties.

We can thank much of European history for the suggestion that Muslims are different. Europe, and hence Britain, has always seen Muslims as a function of its fears and desires. During the Crusades, Muslims presented Europe with religious, intellectual and military challenges. So they were portrayed as infidels, ignorant, and bloodthirsty, the barbarians at the gate of civilisation (which didn't actually exit in Europe!). During the 18th and 19th century, Muslims became treacherous, rebellious subjects of the Empire. In the early part of the last century, Arabs were oversexed Sheikhs ready to whisk white women off to luxurious desert tents, as portrayed by Rudolph Valentino. In the later part, in the aftermath of OPEC and the Iranian revolution, Muslims were capitalist ogres, dangerous revolutionaries, and violent anti-democratic thugs bent on destroying civilisation as we know it. After the Rushdie affair, Muslims became the danger within. Now, they are coming here from Bosnia and Kosovo, Afghanistan and Sudan as asylum seekers to spread their fanaticism and terror and take advantage of soft touch Britain. All of these definitions frame the relationship between Muslims in Britain and British identity.

The problem of young British Muslims
In the absence of a positive identity which they can subscribe to, British Muslims today seek other routes to recognition. American scholar Cornel West has suggested that all identities are constructed from the building blocks of our basic desires: desire for recognition, quest for visibility, the sense of being acknowledged, a deep desire for association. It is a longing to belong. If young British Muslims feel they don't belong here in Britain, they will seek recognition, visibility, acknowledgement and a sense of belonging elsewhere. And this affects the symbols to which they subscribe.

Due to their exclusion from traditional British symbols – pomp and ceremony, marches, national monuments and anthems, cricket and football teams – young Muslims will seek out their own symbols –

beards, turbans, and the rhetoric of injustice. And in a world where symbols are all we are, all we have, holding on to these symbols becomes a matter of life and death. It is for the glorification of these symbols that the bloody tale of national history is written and enacted in nationalists' campaigns everywhere around the world. And it is for deification of these symbols that young British Muslims go off to Yemen and Afghanistan to right countless real and perceived wrongs.

But in the case of British Muslims, identity not only invokes the desire to be different, it also summons the desire to express similarity. Similarity is always seen as the opposite pole of difference, as appeals to making everyone the same. It is often posed as 'our' similarity against 'their' difference. Once the doctrine of similarity was the underlying principle of the communist ethos, now it has become essential to the internationalist-libertarian-individualist doctrine that underpins globalisation. 'Workers of the World Unite' has been replaced by 'Liberal Capitalism is the Only Way' and both of these exclude Muslims. Such championing of similarity can become war on those who fight to maintain their difference. Similarity in such contests becomes an ethos to die for. Enter the Jihadis and the fundamentalists of all religions and persuasions.

In this context, it is hardly surprising that young Muslims do not see themselves as an integral, natural part of the British landscape in its current form. When I visited Oldham during the riots, I did not find the riots themselves all that surprising. On the contrary, I found it astonishing that it took young Muslims born and brought up in Britain, but socially excluded and alienated, so long to riot, and that it required so much provocation from the National Front. Similarly, the rise of fanatical groups like Hizb-e-Tahrir and al-Mhuhajirun and their appeal to young Muslims does not shock me in this context.

Moving forward: the integration of Muslims into British identity

In order to start dealing with Muslims in a coherent way we need to transcend the apparent contradictions and to understand that the desire for similarity is not the same thing as the aspiration for homogeneity. Traditions and customs that do not change cease to be traditions and customs and are transformed into instruments of oppression. Identity has historic anchors but is not fixed to a limited, unchanging set of traditional signs and historic symbols. Identity is not what we buy, or what we choose, or what we impose on others; it has even less to do with flag waving and mindless jingoism. Rather, it is something from which we learn how to live, shape communities, discover what is worth buying, and appreciate what it is to be different.

What we need is to recover our confidence in the notion of Britishness as the product of various and diverse traditions. Before Muslims can feel that they belong, we need to recognise that any identity is the means to synthesise similarity through difference and to see difference as a discrete means of expressing basic similarity. We need to move away from the politics of contested identities, which heighten artificial differences, towards acceptance of the plasticity and possibilities of identities that focus on our common humanity. Living identity, as opposed to the fossilised to die for variety, or the nakedly chauvinist patriotic kind, is always in a constant flux. It is an ever changing balance, the balance of similarities and differences as a way of locating what it is that makes life worth living and what connects us with the rest of the changing world. The challenge of the post-modern world is to change and yet remain the same.

Ziauddin Sardar is a writer and cultural critic.

8   Young People's Lived Experience: The Challenge to Integration

Adrienne Katz

The government's aim to promote social inclusion and community cohesion through initiatives such as youth parliaments and citizenship classes may be undermined because they do not address the fundamental role which street life plays in young people's lives. The day-to-day micro reality – what happens to teenagers on the way to school or in the neighbourhood – will have the greatest impact on their sense of belonging. Policies will need to respond to the fact that fear, the lack of personal safety and the subsequent loss of faith in authority are driving a minority of young people to take their own steps to stay safe. Although small in number, these young people are destabilising society in some dangerous ways with some groups suffering disproportionately. These groups belong namely, but not solely, to ethnic minorities. For young people, the scales are weighted on either side by two opposites: victimhood and a sense of dignity and worth. Anything that can tilt the direction towards dignity will help avoid the dangers inherent in feeding victimhood; for the latter can help shore up a sense of moral right and indignation.[1] Thus empowered, some young people come to feel morally justified in carrying a weapon or forming a gang for self-defence.[2]

This chapter is based on two research projects carried out by Young Voice during momentous events. The first, in Bradford, took place just before the riots of 2001 (86% of the sample reflect ethnic minority communities).[3] The study explored the career aspirations and future dreams of young people and the experience of bullying and racism. The second, in an inner London borough, took place after 11 September. This study explored issues of personal safety, bullying, gangs, attitudes to weapons, drug misuse and emotional well-being among 2062 young people. By monitoring how safe young people feel in their neighbourhood and on the journey to school, and whether or not they were bullied, the projects revealed:

a)   how the lived experience of certain young people differed between groups – and which were more vulnerable to racism and bullying

b)   how this in turn affected their overall attitudes and behaviour such as whether they were more likely to fight back in some way or lose hope altogether.

Young Voice had already found that despite schools being obliged to have anti-bullying policies in place, almost half the pupils don't believe their school has one and half of those who say their school does so, consider it ineffective.[4] The more detailed local studies confirmed this pattern but also made it clear that school policies cannot succeed without support from the wider community and other agencies because bullying gets displaced outside school even when schools are effective at reducing it. From these results Young Voice developed a Coherent Community Approach which aims to respond to young people's multiple needs and use the wider community to support schools in their anti-bullying efforts.

Who is more vulnerable?
It is a truism to say that young people can teach adults a lot about how to get along. The evidence compiled by Young Voice does show that for the most part young people have a remarkable capacity to relate to each other in ways that bridge cultural and ethnic divides. The main problem is that those who aren't able to relate, although small in number, are destabilising communities in dangerous ways.

The London study by Young Voice showed that a *minority* of young people have poor coping strategies in response to threats and fears. We have labelled this group 'at risk'.[5] There are two main coping strategies displayed by this group. The *Submitters*, on the one hand, who become

timid or withdrawn, do not fulfil their potential or become depressed. If they use drugs it is 'to relieve tension'.[6] These young people become increasingly disaffected from school or unsure about their potential, a trend which affects their life chances in the long-term. The effects on aspiration and attainment in this group are clear. In Bradford, this showed itself in the fact that young people had a more resigned attitude, with 20% saying that 'bullying has made me feel I can't do things' in contrast to only 14% of people saying this in the national sample. Fewer than half these people believe 'I will achieve my goal' for the future, in contrast to almost two-thirds of other students. The second group could be referred to as the *Retaliators*. These are the young people who fight back and fall into risky patterns of behaviour, particularly joining gangs or carrying weapons. They pick fights, feel depressed, and bully other people. They also use more drugs and alcohol. The inappropriate actions they take put not only themselves at risk, but act to destabilise their neighbourhood as a whole and they too become less likely to fulfil their potential.

In both cases, bullying plays a key role in this process of destabilisation. More worryingly, our studies found that often bullying comes in the form of covert racism because young people from ethnic minorities reported higher indices of bullying overall. In 'Bullying in Britain' in 2000, Young Voice found that one quarter of ethnic minority children reported having been severely bullied in contrast to 13% of white children. Consequently, one finds that young people from ethnic minorities are often more likely to be 'at risk'. In a survey of 2,062 inner London teenagers post-11 September, for example, one in six young people had a chance of being 'at risk'. Within this troubling group of 315 young people, Asians were the most likely to join a gang and carry a weapon. Nearly all of these 'at risk' young Asians described being attacked, bullied and insulted and the feeling prevailed among nine in ten that 'it is acceptable to carry a weapon for self defence'.[7]

Nonetheless, fixed prescriptions which focus on black or Asian populations miss the point for two reasons. One reason is because

minority population patterns vary from one neighbourhood to another, with different groups becoming targeted by bullies because they belong to the smallest minority. Another reason is that the experiences of young people from the same ethnic group living in the same neighbourhood deviated sharply; those 'at risk' and those not 'at risk' led entirely different lives. Asians who were not defined as 'at risk', for example, were also the *least* likely of young people to either join a gang or carry a weapon. Similar bipolar patterns could be identified among black pupils and their attitudes to school.[8] When pupils were asked if they 'enjoyed school' for example, black pupils *not* in the 'at risk' category responded *more positively* than the average of all pupils. This was startling since black pupils are widely known to be the most likely to be excluded from school. [9] On closer examination, black pupils also topped the groups who said they disliked school. The question is *which* groups within these communities are unhappy and *why?*

A more subtle way of analysing the responses of young people is to explore whether the young person sees his or her neighbourhood as a good place in which to grow up; how valued, safe and respected they feel within school and outside it. The surveys in London showed that the young people, including white young people, who said 'ethnic groups don't get on at all in my neighbourhood', were the most likely to be 'at risk'. Of all those interviewed, 50% thought that the different ethnic groups in their neighbourhood get on either 'OK', 'Well,' or 'Very Well.[10] But the 8% who said they believed that ethnic groups do 'not get on at all' in their neighbourhood were the most troubling. Although small in number they were disproportionately disturbing to the majority and to themselves. Almost a third of them reported having been bullied within the last two weeks and more than one in four were likely to fall into the 'at risk' category in contrast to one in six generally. Forty-three per cent said they were likely to join a gang and 61% believe 'it is acceptable to carry a weapon for safety' (one in five already do). They were also more likely to use hard drugs, make abusive comments to teachers and almost half of them admit to bullying other people. This small minority might grow alarmingly if the

further 11% of young people who replied that different ethnic groups 'only just get on', come to agree with them that 'we do not get on at all'.

Moving forward: a Coherent Community Approach

The results of these surveys are the basis of Young Voice's Coherent Community Approach. The aim is to provide local services with evidence of young people's needs, looking both at how we can better understand the lived experience of young people who are potentially 'at risk', pre-empt the development of risky patterns of behaviour and help them fulfil their potential. At the heart of this is young people's voice and involvement. Unless we hear from them about what is working or not working to reduce bullying and racism, imposed solutions will be likely to fail. Unless they wholeheartedly support reduction strategies and believe they work, cynicism will grow. This is why ongoing research with participation is vital. Drawing from what young people have told us in our projects and some innovative projects currently being run at local level, the Coherent Community Approach is divided into four key steps:

Tipping the balance towards dignity: Children need tools to be able to rise above the threats and taunting or intimidation. The best way of supplying these is by giving them something concrete to help build up confidence and counter low self-esteem. In Bradford, for example, a small, low-key youth programme run by a countryside officer helps young Muslim women become involved in the management of countryside projects and outings. The activities are specifically designed to build confidence by giving these young women skills, self-efficacy and determination. By designing a service which is responsive to the cultural sensitivities of their background (for example, ensuring that the girls were chaperoned at all times so that their parents are not opposed to them attending the sessions), the programme enables them to become part of the mainstream and thrive in the education system. The results speak for themselves: in an area of deprivation in which their mothers barely had education and where their school got 23% through GCSE at A-C grade, eleven out of fourteen of these potentially 'at risk' girls have gone on to higher education.

Understanding groups better: Efforts to promote integration or reduce bullying/racism cannot fall into simple broad-brush categories, i.e. designing services only for black and Asian teenagers. Services need to factor in the discrepancies between different groups and be able to identify those people who are in the minority in any given area. Clearly this will differ from one location to another. The minority may be white, or it may be defined as an even smaller category – Catholic, Greek Cypriot or Somali. Monitoring changing patterns in bullying and racism requires constant vigilance and tracking the mutations of the types of bullying and racism practised. Young Voice is setting up a Bully Data Bank to do this. This data bank will centrally hold all the information gathered by Young Voice in partnership with young people. It will be able to provide monitoring and comparisons. To know whether or not an anti-bullying policy works, we need to follow trends, see what works and what needs tweaking. Local authorities will be able to have a survey undertaken, followed by a service keeping them informed.

Putting the street at the centre of our policies: In order to work, policies need to involve not only teachers and school staff, but bus drivers, the police, and other members of the community. Although police and schools know when and where the trouble takes place, youth violence is not always addressed. Practical steps could be taken to make sure that the journey to and from school is not a war zone. Durham County Council has been responsive to this need and put in place training schemes to help their employees develop the skills necessary to identify and deal with bullying. They have instigated a county-wide programme offering training packages to teachers, pupil peer support teams, and council staff such as librarians and park keepers. The aim is to help all these stakeholders develop greater awareness about the complexities which lie behind 'at risk' behaviour.

Getting all agencies to work together: The borough of Islington has carried out a multi-agency investigation into the day-to-day

experienced of its young people. This stakeholder approach makes each agency aware of the way in which their little bit of the teenager's life is linked with other factors. Schools, as well as the drug and alcohol team, the youth offending team, play and leisure departments and the co-ordinator of the Personal Social and Health Education curriculum, all worked collaboratively with Young Voice. The results of the study provided evidence of the complex interaction of factors at work and clear evidence of how necessary a joined-up approach actually is. The motivation of drug users and the links with bullying, or the reasons why people might carry a weapon, are vital information for services tackling these problems.

Conclusion: Involving the community

A Coherent Community Approach does not expect schools to tackle bullying and harassment alone. It involves the local community, the very adults who live on the estates where the tensions may brew up. Parents too must be asked to sign up to the whole school anti-bullying strategy when their child starts school at secondary level because parents often give advice to their child which is directly counter to the school's policy of non-violence. Violence at home was found to be a driver behind violence on the street so working with parents and teaching Positive Parenting may be needed in some cases. Above all, it calls for collective responsibility for the safety and dignity of all young citizens. Without an improvement in their personal experience of safety, these young people will perceive all our calls for inclusion and integration as just window dressing.

Adrienne Katz is Executive Director of Young Voice

[1] See Ian Vine, 'Citizenship, Identity and Alienation', (University of Bradford, 2001).
[2] In an Inner London neighbourhood around 167 will join gangs for safety and 13% may carry weapons to protect themselves. Joining a gang for 'confidence' and 'respect' was 50% more likely among Asians who experienced high levels of bullying and harassment. Katz, A., Stockdale, D., Dabbous, A., 'Gangs, Weapons and Safety: Teenagers Talk', (Young Voice: In Press).
[3] 'Thwarted Dreams: Young Views from Bradford', (Young Voice: 2002).
[4] Katz, A., Buchanan, A., Bream,V., 'Bullying in Britain: Testimonies from Teenagers', (Young Voice: 2001).

[5] To be considered 'at risk', respondents had to reply positively to at least two of the following: joining of a gang, carrying a weapon, taking a drug other than cannabis in the last month, feeling very depressed, suicidal, bullying others and smashing something up or picking fights when distressed.
[6] 11% of teenagers who use illegal drugs said they do it to relieve depression and 20% said it is to 'get rid of stress'.
[7] 27% would carry a weapon if 'people I know do'. 34% if 'other gangs do'. 59% know someone who carries a weapon.
[8] Using the term 'black' is unsubtle: black Caribbean pupils were less approving of school than black Africans.
[9] The rate of exclusion for all black pupils was three times that of all other pupils in 1999/00, DfES.
[10] Waltham Forest Health Authority has commissioned Young Voice to investigate how bullying interacts with health issues for all its ethnic groups.

PART IV

COMMUNITY
AND INTEGRATION

9   Integration with Diversity: Globalisation and the Renewal of Democracy and Civil Society

David Blunkett

Globalisation has increased the extent and complexity of migration throughout the world. In the year 2000, there were some 168 million people living outside their country of origin – 21 million of whom were refugees or displaced persons. Migration is now of crucial importance to developing countries, for whom remittances from migrant workers can outstrip overseas aid in economic significance. So, for example, 'Migradollars' earned in the USA are now the most significant source of foreign exchange for many Central American countries. And managed migration also benefits advanced economies, supplying the workers they need at different skills levels, and cementing trade links.

But migration also brings significant cultural, as well as economic, benefits. It increases the diversity of our societies, and builds up our cultural capital. In the UK, we have always been an open, trading nation, enriched by our global links. Contemporary patterns of migration extend this tradition.

Unless properly managed, however, migration can be perceived as a threat to community stability and good race relations. Where asylum is used as a route to economic migration, it can cause deep resentment in the host community. Democratic governments need to ensure that their electorates have confidence and trust in the nationality, immigration and asylum systems they are operating, or else people will turn to extremists for answers.

This is a key issue that I want to address in this article. But I want to start by looking at how the events of 11 September have shaped

contemporary political debates. In particular, I will examine how they have acted as a prism through which many issues of social order, community cohesion and cultural diversity have been viewed in recent months.

11 September

People from all over the world were killed in the attacks on the World Trade Centre. They came from many different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds. Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Hindu believers were killed together as they worked in the towers. It is a bitter irony of the terrorist atrocity that the centre was targeted as a symbol of US capitalism, yet as a hub of global finance, its workers came from across the world, including Islamic countries. Wall Street's bankers and stockbrokers are multinational, reflecting the integration of finance capital in the global economy. And its waiters, cleaners and chefs are equally cosmopolitan, reflecting the reality of mass migration in the modern world.

The 11 September atrocity has come to crystallise the fear and insecurity many people feel in this new globalised age. It was such an appalling, inexplicable and morally unimaginable act of terror that it appeared almost to symbolise our vulnerability itself.

But it is not simply fears that were evoked on 11 September and during its immediate aftermath. Rather, an extraordinary mutuality emerged in New York itself and across the United States of America, building on a national identity and commitment which embraces those from different cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds. It was a mutuality which spread outwards to embrace the kind of internationalism which is always talked about on the Left of politics, but which in this case, interestingly, did not appear wholly to engage some of those who would count themselves as internationalists. How many of those who normally preach solidarity and interdependence were opposed to the action against the Taliban and their protection of bin Laden and the al-Qaida terrorists?

It's a strange paradox, but one that is mirrored too often in the contradictions that exist in domestic as well as international affairs, when values and principles on the one hand get muddled with immediate reaction and long held antagonisms on the other.

Defending democracy

The attack was, of course, a threat to economic stability, to commerce and social intercourse, but primarily it was a threat to democracy. It was was not simply a terrorist action, but a fundamental rejection of the values of democracy. The al-Qaida and their Taliban sponsors were motivated by doctrines that reject democratic norms, human rights, and the whole moral basis upon which our society has evolved in recent centuries. In that sense, it was an attack on modernity itself, reflected in the medieval repression to which Afghanistan was subjected under Taliban rule.

The military intervention in Afghanistan was therefore substantially also a defense of democracy, and fundamental norms of human rights. It was not, however, a defense of Western civilization against Islam. To portray it as such is politically misguided and historically wrong. It reduces the diversity of the states of the entire Islamic world – their structures of governance, civil societies, and religious and secular practices – to an extreme and crude parody of the faith to which the majority of their populations give adherence. It is akin to reducing the whole of the world in which the Christian faith is practiced to the actions of a cult. Moreover, it ignores the fact that a substantial proportion of the citizens of the West are themselves Muslims – something which is very important to social cohesion in countries such as the UK.

People who talk about a clash of civilizations also imply that the West has a moral superiority over Islamic culture. This is scarcely credible, not least because the most appalling genocide the world has ever seen took place in the 20th century in the heart of Europe. And historically, it is basically wrong. It obscures the depth of shared history that has

formed our societies in both East and West. Trade and commerce, intellectual engagement, and cultural exchange have taken place throughout the centuries. So to suppose that there are two civilisations that have no shared roots or mutual ties flies in the face of history.

This is not to say, of course, that there isn't a continuing tension between modernity and the cultural practices of some of those entering highly-advanced countries. This is not true, of course, for the majority of those entering the more developed world, but it is for those who, because of education or geography, find themselves catapulted into effectively different centuries. They are making a journey in the space of a few weeks or months, which it has taken us hundreds of years to make.

Recognising and helping people with this change is as much part of the job of the settled community of similar religion and culture as it is of the host nation, and this is one of the challenges that we need to face. Accepted norms hundreds of years ago in this country, but now rejected, remain acceptable from particular cultures of varying religions. This is why Pim Fortuyn, the leader of the Libertarian Right movement in the Netherlands before his assassination in the Spring of 2002, had a point to make about the clash of modernity with long held cultural traditions – but not of course the solution he offered. Those who struggle intellectually and morally between their dislike of the Taliban and their instinctive opposition to the United States, found themselves equally at odds with modernity and cultural correctness when it came to Afghanistan.

The military engagement in Afghanistan illustrates not a war of competing civilisations, but a defence of democratic states from terrorist attacks sponsored by deep oppression and brutalisation. But democracy is not only defended in military terms – it is defended in depth through the commitment of its citizens to its basic values. When the people of New York pulled together after 11 September, they were displaying not just mutual sympathy, support and solidarity, but a

patriotic commitment to their democracy. By that I mean patriotism in its most decent and deeply expressed sense of civil virtue – a commitment to one's community, its values and institutions.

It follows that the strongest defence of democracy resides in the engagement of every citizen with the community, from activity in the neighbourhood, through to participation in formal politics. Interestingly, when Robert Putnam, the American theorist, conducted a survey of social capital in the USA since 11 September he found that people have become more concerned about community and politics, and more engaged as citizens, as a result of the atrocity. Rather than terrorising people, the attack appears to have stimulated greater social cohesion and civic awareness.

Security and social order
But the defence of our democratic way of life also requires that the threat to security at home is met. Securing basic social order, and protecting people against attack, is a basic function of government – a fact that has been recognised at least since Thomas Hobbes penned his famous description of life in the ungoverned state of nature as "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short."

That is why, in the aftermath of 11 September, I took the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act through Parliament. I had to ensure that basic civil liberties and human rights were protected, at the same time as ensuring the protection of the public from terrorist attack in conditions of heightened threat.

There were, of course, real arguments about the balance between the immediate reaction to the threat and the long-term imperative to protect fundamental democratic norms. Constructive tensions exist in any democratic society between the freedom of the individual, the liberty of the population as a whole to move safely and freely, and the overriding well-being of the nation state. These tensions are most acute at times of war or crisis. And as I illustrated in my book *Politics and Progress*,

there has been a misunderstanding on the liberal Left in particular of the need to maintain stability and security in order to protect basic individual freedoms and liberty, rather than allow them to be eroded.[1]

Of course, the democratic state can sometimes abuse its power as much as those who seek to destroy it, abuse fundamental rights and democratic practices. In simple terms, there is an obligation on those who have some influence over the levers of state power to be more careful to maintain democratic freedoms from those who oppose these values. In spelling out to the House of Commons what I believed to be the balance between meeting the terrorist threat and the danger of over-reaction, I genuinely believed that the failure to take action would be an act of weakness.

As I had already reflected prior to 11 September, this was surely the lesson of the failure to understand the Nazi threat in Weimar Germany, or the social disintegration which led to the military coup against the elected government of the Spanish Second Republic.

Most of the criticism of the Act focused on the provisions for detention of foreign nationals in the UK who are suspected of terrorist activity or represent a threat to national security, in circumstances where a prosecution cannot be brought in this country, for either juridical or evidential reasons. My opponents on the Right argued that I should simply deport these people, whatever the consequences. On the opposite wing of the argument, civil libertarians accused me of breaching the fundamental principle of detention without trial.

I was not prepared to abrogate Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights, and deport people to countries where they could face death and torture. But neither was I prepared simply to let people stay in the country freely if they represented a threat to national security. My solution was to permit detention of these foreign nationals, building on existing immigration powers, but give them a right of appeal to senior judges on the Special Immigration Appeals Commission, who could

overturn my ruling with access to the available intelligence evidence. In addition, those detained could leave the country at any point if they could find a safe third country to take them.

I believe this to be a correct and morally defensible means of protecting the basic right to security, as well as the liberties and freedoms, of the people I am elected to represent. The provisions of the Act are subject to statutory review, and many of the major clauses must be renewed by primary legislation after a set duration. I believe the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act will stand as a good example of the balances that must be struck by those who seek to defend the basic principles of democracy in conditions of uncertainty and threat.

However, we also need to face the fact that to protect democracy, we must strengthen it. This is not about returning to a 19th century form of Parliamentary representation and therefore relying solely on accountability through the ballot box. It is more fundamental than that. We need to engage people with participative democracy, so that they are part of the process. At present, they simply do not feel that government is 'on their side'. We need a new relationship between governed and governing, which reflects the profound changes that have taken place in our society. Globalisation has changed the nature of the power held by nation states, and the balance of forces in society. Aspirations are now much greater for control over the consumption of both public and personal goods and services. And people want to be active in civil society, sharing in the governance of their own communities of geography or interest.

But to protect the framework within which democracy can flourish, change and grow, it is necessary to understand the pysche and contempt for democracy displayed by those who would use suicide bombing and terror to get their way. This is true whether initiated by those funded and organised by Osama bin Laden, or by those who choose to send teenagers to their death as suicide bombers in the (legitimate) cause of establishing a viable Palestinian state.

By the same token, of course, democratic states like Israel who act to defend their citizens must abide by international law and conventions, and uphold moral standards. As we know from painful experience in Northern Ireland, conflicts between communities that have legitimate aspirations and rights cannot be resolved by brute force. A lasting peace depends on dialogue and justice.

Tackling crime together

At a very different level, we see in the elections across Europe in late 2001 and through 2002 a rejection of ruling establishments, bordering on contempt for corporatism. Whilst there is no doubt that perception can be substantially fostered or altered by campaigns through the print and broadcast media, politicians that do not hear and respond to the genuine feelings and concerns of those they serve, will in the 21st century receive short shrift. This, therefore, raises profound issues about the relationship between governed and governing, between civil society and formal political democracy, and of course about the role of Government in a global, economic, and social firmament, where issues of rapid change and fears of social dislocation remain critical to a feeling of general wellbeing and stability. Dismissing this as either a Right-wing agenda or of marginal relevance can only lead to the demise of progressive politics.

There are wider implications here for the political thinking of the Centre-Left. In *Politics and Progress* I examine the importance of social order and security to a healthy democracy and strong civil society. My argument is that the Centre-Left has never adequately theorized social order – its importance, and the conditions in which it is sustained. In addition to a tendency to be suspicious of any external military action, we have in the past assumed too readily that a fair society of free and equal citizens would naturally be a harmonious one, and that the role of the state in protecting social order would become less important as social justice was achieved.

At its crudest, this was expressed as a simple economic reductionism:

that crime and disorder were simply the result of unemployment and economic crisis. Whilst it is certainly true that the highest rates of crime are found in the most disadvantaged areas, this kind of simplistic cause and effect analysis – with the ethical laxity towards criminal acts that usually comes with it – is not tenable in contemporary societies. The causes of crime, as well as the solutions for tackling it, are far more complex and multifaceted than simple material poverty can explain.

Tony Blair's famous sound bite, "tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime", demonstrated for the first time that the Labour Party cared about dealing with criminals, and knew how to tackle crime. It repositioned the Centre-Left on crime, in a politically crucial fashion. But we have yet to fully develop that lead through into our political theory. Too often the debate is polarised between liberals and authoritarians. There is a tendency for those who justifiably want to protect human rights to fall into the trap of placing themselves on the side of the criminal, rather than the victim. In fact, whose side you are on is not only an important signal to the public, but a recognition of representative democracy itself. We need to be clearly placed on the side of the victim, but also on the protection and integrity of society. Individual rights, not subsumed but set within the context of broader freedoms, place those who believe in interdependence and mutuality firmly on the side of securing justice, and not simply 'due process'.

What I have tried to offer is new thinking on tackling social disorder and crime, based on a civil politics for the Centre-Left; a politics of mutualism and civil renewal that places a premium on active self-government within communities. My core belief is that the good society is one in which people are active as citizens in shaping what happens in their communities. People are only genuinely free and fulfilled when they themselves determine what happens in their community, not when someone else does it for them, or when they simply abdicate responsibility and retreat into the private realm.

What this means is that we have to nurture trust, confidence and the capacity to get things done in communities. None of that is possible if an area is plagued by crime, disorder and social disintegration, any more than maintaining liberty and making progressive change is possible if the state is threatened. Establishing basic order and security is a prerequisite of building social capital.

But beyond that, it means building community solutions to social problems. In terms of crime reduction, it means drawing on the moral resources of the community to tackle offending behavior – helping parents deal with difficult children; ensuring that antisocial behavior is not condoned or tolerated; and enabling people actively to shape policing strategies and assist the law enforcement agencies.

A civil politics also places the community at the heart of the process of justice. It sets out to make criminal justice comprehensible to the community, so that the processes of law are demystified, and the sentences imposed on criminals bear some tangible relation to the reality of everyday life. That doesn't mean pandering to the lowest common denominator; in fact, quite the reverse. Brutal, simplistic solutions like capital punishment tend to gain support when the criminal justice system is completely opaque to people, and they play no part in it.

Similarly, community engagement in crime reduction attempts to 're-socialise' the processes of justice back into the local community. This can be achieved through a variety of mechanisms, such as: lay involvement in offender panels; restorative justice forums in which offenders have to confront the consequences of their behaviour; and rehabilitation and reparation policies which involve the community, as well as perpetrators of crime, in taking responsibility for stopping offending. It sees effective, tough community sentences as a strong alternative to prison for those who are not a serious, violent danger to the public, because these are about confronting somebody's lack of social morality, and ensuring that the community is given reparation for the crime.

Social order and the response to the far Right

Promoting social order and community renewal is a political, as well as a social, imperative. History shows us that anti-democratic forces, particularly from the far Right, gain support in conditions of fear and insecurity, mutual distrust and ignorance. When crime and insecurity rises, people look for authoritarian solutions, unless there is a credible alternative. This is what has happened in Europe in recent months. The substantial vote for Le Pen and other anti-immigration or overtly fascist parties has come about because millions of ordinary voters have felt alienated from the mainstream political process, and have looked for solutions from extreme parties.

Of course, there are tactical lessons for the Left as well. Le Pen's breakthrough came about because the Left vote in France was fundamentally split. Large numbers of French voters abandoned the French socialists in favour of Trotskyist candidates, only to find themselves having to vote for Jacques Chirac in the second round to keep Le Pen out. Such sectarianism mirrors the disastrous policy of dividing the Left opposition to fascism that Stalin imposed on Western Communists in the early 1930s. Describing parliamentary socialists as 'social fascists', the communists effectively prevented the formation of a united anti-fascist bloc, fatally weakening the opposition to the rise of the Nazi Right until it was too late. Those who write off any engagement with mainstream politics, and denigrate the motives and morals of democratic politicians, make the same mistake today.

Giving meaning to citizenship

A major part of the progressive response to this challenge must be found in giving content and meaning to citizenship and nationality. Too often, we have let citizenship go by default. Until 2002, we had not taught citizenship in our schools. Nor have we sought to induct new members of the community into what it means to be a British citizen. Nor have we actively promoted community cohesion and a shared sense of civic belonging.

An active concept of citizenship can articulate shared ground between diverse communities. It offers a shared identity based on membership to a political community, rather than forced assimilation into a monoculture, or an unbridled multiculturalism which privileges difference over community cohesion. It is what the White Paper, *Secure Borders, Safe Haven*, called "integration with diversity."

The starting point for an active concept of citizenship must be a set of basic rights and duties. Respect for cultural difference has limits, marked out by fundamental human rights and duties. Some of these boundaries are very clear, such as in the examples of forced marriage or female circumcision (more accurately described as female genital mutilation, for that is what it is). These practices are clearly incompatible with our basic values – an observation which went unremarked in the first edition of my book, but one for which I was later vilified! However, other issues are less clear, and it is for democratic politics to resolve disagreement and find solutions.

Respect and support for diversity within the boundaries established by basic rights and duties is equally crucial. People must be free to choose how to lead their lives, what religion to follow, and so on. Such diversity is not only right; it is desirable. It brings immense social, economic and cultural benefits to our society.

But there must also be greater content to citizenship beyond these foundations: it must be an active, real expression of the life of the community. Citizenship should be about shared participation, from the neighbourhood to national elections. That is why we must strive to connect people from different backgrounds, tackle segregation, and overcome mutual hostility and ignorance. Of course, one factor in this is the ability of new migrants to speak English – otherwise they cannot get good jobs, or share in wider social debate. But for those long settled in the UK, it is about social class issues of education, housing, jobs and regeneration, and tackling racism.

I have never said, or implied, that lack of fluency in English was in any way directly responsible for the disturbances in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham in the summer of 2001. However, speaking English enables parents to converse with their children in English, as well as in their historic mother tongue, at home and to participate in wider modern culture. It helps overcome the schizophrenia which bedevils generational relationships. In as many as 30% of Asian British households, according to the recent citizenship survey, English is not spoken at home. But let us be clear that lack of English fluency did not cause the riots.

It is vital that the Left doesn't inhibit debate on these issues. Where people feel silenced, they turn to the politics of despair. We should embrace debate on citizenship, and make change happen in our communities, rather than just the statute book. If the Left fails to offer real solutions to these issues, the Right will step into the gap.

From politics to progress

Since I became Home Secretary, I have sought to put the political beliefs and policies I have outlined in this article and others published since June 7th 2001 into practice. Home Secretaries are notoriously vulnerable to 'events', and I am no exception. That's one reason why it is important to have a set of guiding values which underpin a framework of policy. Without this foundation, the events that emerge from nowhere can blow you off course and obscure the work you are already doing. Given the tendency to collective amnesia in the Britain of the 21st century, where published policy or even immediate action is forgotten within weeks, I certainly don't hold my breath as to whether I should find myself equally subject to the winds of misfortune.

David Blunkett is Home Secretary of Great Britain

[1] David Blunkett, '*Politics and Progress: Renewing Democracy and Civil Society*', (Demos/Politicos: 2001).

10 Ethnic Minorities and the Labour Market

Shamit Saggar*

Britain is a society whose ethnic, cultural and group identity has undergone considerable change, especially in the period after 1945. The prime forces behind these transformations have been the influx of sizeable numbers of non-white immigrants, chiefly from former colonial sources, and the longer-term impact that has resulted from their settlement in Britain. The picture of post-war race relations in Britain is therefore one that, on one hand, has been linked with substantial political controversy and, on the other, has generally been accommodated into the mainstream system of democratic politics. Throughout, political leaders have stressed that Britain has avoided the rise of a US-style racial fault line scarring all segments of society. At the same time, much of government policy in the period since the mid-1960s has been geared towards an integration strategy in civic-political and social-cultural terms. Thus, one of the striking features of the policy landscape has been the limited efforts that have been made to secure a foundation based on economic integration, particularly in the labour market. The purposes of this chapter are first to examine the evidence on labour market participation, second draw out conclusions for wider integration, and finally to put forward a sketch for the trajectory of multicultural, multiracial Britain.

Few policymakers were directly concerned with the long-term economic, political or social consequences of the early waves of labour migration from South Asia, the Caribbean and Africa when it commenced during the 1950s.[1] In fact, many assumed that these initial flows could be easily regulated and in any case were not necessarily permanent. Beyond that, theories of immigrant succession have assumed that long-term progression into the domestic labour market would follow smoothly for the offspring of first generation immigrants.

The ability to secure economic integration therefore has both economic and social implications. Certainly, differentials in labour market achievements can also have an impact on wider relations between ethnic groups. The especially strong or especially poor achievements of certain groups in the labour market may lead to cultural and ethnic stereotypes within and beyond the workplace. For example, the relatively poor performance of some young black men in the labour market may generate negative stereotypes of young black men in general. These can easily obscure their genuine potential in the eyes of society. The real danger in these negative stereotypes lies in younger people's aspirations being suppressed as a result of *others'* low expectations of their potential. If transferred to peers and between generations, this could lead to cycles of discouragement and further social exclusion.

Furthermore, important aspects of social cohesion can be undermined by a persistent failure to tackle ethnic minorities' labour market differentials. Employment, or its absence, are obviously major elements of people's objective economic circumstances. The recognition of disparities in economic circumstances across ethnic groups can lead to tensions, alienation and diminished trust and understanding. This in turn can have significant consequences for building and maintaining cohesion within society at large.

Dominant traditions of thought

A dominant intellectual and policy perspective during this early period of immigration centred on the idea of assimilation, whereby it was widely thought that black and Asian immigrants would adapt quickly to cultural, lifestyle and attitudinal norms of a largely white 'host' society. During this early spell of immigration, this dominant intellectual and policy perspective led, for the most part, to a laissez-faire approach by Government in dealing with those migrants.

Some limited foundations were laid in the 1960s to address the, as yet, unrecognised challenges of integration. Exploratory investigations were carried out on the question of what, if anything, might be done to ease the settlement of South Asian and Caribbean migrants who had already made their way to Britain, for example. In 1962 the Commonwealth Immigrants Advisory Council (CIAC) was established by Government. Its first three reports focused on core aspects of the integration of immigrants, mainly in the sphere of education.[2]

Strategic consideration of how to respond to the challenges of immigration can be dated from 1965 and led to reforms including legislation. There have been several further extensions of legislation as well as a number of important policy departures. These have ranged from interventions to address the problems faced by schools and children of immigrants to large-scale interventions to address long-term structural decline of inner cities. Throughout there has been broad agreement that the extent of the problems faced by second-generation ethnic minorities would be less than, and certainly no greater than, those faced by their parents. The reality for some groups has been precisely the opposite.

First-generation immigrants have tended to cluster geographically as well as occupationally and by sector. The assumption was that over time these initial patterns would break down as a result of integration in practice and replaced, gradually but steadily, by a broader spread of ethnic minorities in different regions, industries and occupational grades. The existence of these new patterns would signify social and economic integration for first-generation immigrants and would create the foundation for similar or improved levels of success for their children. This would be the case even if there were marked ways in which the expectations of first-generation immigrants had for themselves were suppressed in their new context. The expectations and aspirations of second-generation ethnic minorities have not been similarly suppressed and represent an important sub-text for the evidence presented in this report.

Several observations can be made about this picture. First, where progress in the labour market among ethnic minorities has been recorded it has not been sustained, it is often based upon tenuous foundations and, in many cases, it does not correlate closely with actual human capital gains. Equally, first-generation groups who are rich in human capital have often succeeded in making labour market gains because of their pre-existing advantageous position. This success and advantage has equally been cumulative and linked to some impressive inter-generational economic advancement.

Secondly, the location of first-generation settlement – and the labour market demand factors behind such settlement – have been a key determinant in later patterns of success or its absence. For instance, unlike their Pakistani counterparts, Indian immigrants and their children have tended to settle in areas of continued economic growth. This further reinforces their position as a supplier of labour as well as in related areas such as the housing market. Pakistani immigrants and their children, on the other hand, have tended to settle in areas of structural economic decline in manufacturing and textiles. This in turn has hampered opportunity structures, not only in employment, but also in housing and wider geographic mobility.

Thirdly, the early assumption that integration would be accompanied by geographic, professional and sectoral dispersion over time was based on a partial understanding of the barriers faced by black and Asian people in the labour market. In fact, as the previous points illustrate, the barriers are much more complex and multi-faceted and can be subtle in their effects. A better understanding of this complexity will lead to a better understanding of the link between economic and other notions of integration. The outcomes that accrue to greater economic integration (in particular in the labour market) are, of course, closely related to social and political integration. For example, ethnic minorities who have jobs in the mainstream labour market are more likely to interact, share and exchange perspectives with their white counterparts.

Legislative paths to racial integration

The integration of immigrants and ethnic minorities into British society is not a new area of concern for Government.[3] This challenge has been on the table for Government – and others – more-or-less continuously for 40 years. The particular difficulties encountered in the labour market stemming from racial discrimination were a focus of Britain's initial anti-discrimination laws. The first Race Relations Act (1965) sought to curb direct acts of racial discrimination, typically those that took place in public locations such a shops, restaurants or on buses. However, the Act exempted the employment and housing markets and thus created a major structural gap that was only filled through the second Race Relations Act (1968). This second piece of legislation also separated out the promotional role of statutory provision by establishing the Community Relations Commission as distinct from the enforcement role assigned to the Race Relations Board.[4]

This principle of indirect discrimination was embodied in Britain's third Race Relations Act (1976) and gave a new Commission for Racial Equality powers to investigate and intervene accordingly. An underlying premise within this approach was that the rights and opportunities of ethnic minorities would be endlessly suppressed unless a willingness existed to look beyond overt acts of discrimination. That said, the legislation operates on the basis of a negative prohibition on discrimination. A different approach has been embodied in the 2000 Race Relations (Amendment) Act. This set out to place a new general statutory duty upon public bodies to put in place plans to promote and deliver racial equality. This positive duty effectively means that a pro-active stance is expected of employers in the realm of public sector employment.

Variance in policy goals

There have been a variety of successful and part successful attempts to define the underlying policy goals of Government. In the main these have related to Government's own leadership responsibilities in the domain of race relations. A number of distinctions can be set out in relation to what these goals are or should be. First, many policymakers and commentators have supported the goal of *promoting racial harmony*. This can be defined as the absence of overt racial conflict and whilst obviously desirable has been criticised for trying to search for social peace at all costs. Significantly, it can be argued that fundamentally racially unequal societies may be in a state of relative harmony without necessarily exhibiting signs of overt conflict.

Secondly, fearful that harmony goals might obscure disadvantage, others have emphasised the goal of *equal opportunities*. This goal looks to identify and root out underlying, hidden barriers to participation in arenas such as employment, education, housing, and so on. These barriers can often be latent and buried in existing day-to-day policies and procedures and even in employers' or educators' values and outlooks to recruitment. A more level playing field is sought in which talent or qualifications are more readily used to reward individuals. For this reason, a meritocratic tone surrounds this goal.

Finally, frustration with basic participatory-type goals has led some to embrace more explicitly distributional goals. Aiming for *fair, or fairer, shares* has been one obvious manifestation of this. Precisely because other goals and approaches are driven by examining inputs, there can be doubts about the extent to which this can or has delivered meaningful results, especially for traditionally under-represented groups in schools, universities, firms, and so on. Any weakness or unexplained delay in creating a more level playing field may mean that probing questions are raised about the longer run capacity to arrive at such a point at all. As a consequence, a goal can be envisaged that is far more outcome-oriented and which focuses on distribution rather than participation questions. The chief difficulty that this approach can encounter is uncertainty over the basis for understanding a fair or fairer share of resources. This might aim for a strict microcosm of group membership in society or in a city. Alternatively the target may incorporate a theory of historic compensatory rights.

Labour market disadvantage

There are a number of reasons why the labour market achievements of ethnic minorities matter, and in ways that affect people across all ethnic groups. First, ethnic minority groups appear to be significantly disadvantaged in the British labour market. Members of ethnic minorities experience considerable additional unemployment risks and earnings gaps and these inevitably lead to major material consequences and negatively impact the economic advancement of relevant ethnic groups. Limited economic opportunities are closely bound-up with social exclusion.

Secondly, the position of particular, so-called high-achieving groups may be especially disappointing when looking at the kinds of employment returns to education that they experience. Those who are characterised by high education profiles and yet poor employment prospects (e.g. black Africans) may represent considerable under-utilisation of high quality labour resources which can lead to a less productive economy with implications for everyone and should thus not be seen in isolation.

Thirdly, the effects of discriminatory behaviour by employers in particular sectors of the economy may discourage further entry into those sectors by ethnic minorities. This kind of labour market distortion is likely to increase labour supply in other sectors and thereby suppress earnings across the board for white and ethnic minority workers in these sectors. Wages may rise at the same time in those sectors where ethnic minority workers have implicitly avoided seeking employment.

Labour market access, participation and progression

A Performance and Innovation Unit (PIU) study has examined a number of key aspects of the employment cycle. For example, broadly speaking, the analysis looks at rates of participation as measured by employment and unemployment rates and rates of achievement as measured by both occupational attainment and earnings. It also considers more specific aspects of the employment cycle such as the

application and appraisal processes in its discussion on discrimination. The study also considers the employment cycle experiences of groups of individuals.

The main focus of the study has been Britain's black and Asian ethnic minority groups, which account for four-fifths of the ethnic minority population nationally. It was these groups that participated in largest numbers in the immigration and economic restructuring process following World War II, and these, consequently, for whom the most comprehensive data sets exist.

Two approaches to measuring labour achievement have been used in this report: gross and net. Both types are necessary to gain a clear picture of the position of ethnic minorities. First, there are the average *gross differences* in unemployment, earnings, occupational attainment and self-employment between ethnic minorities and the white population in Britain. From the gross picture, the study examines the influence relevant characteristics such as age, generation, gender and education have on labour market achievements in order to identify the *net differences* or the differences in labour market achievement that persist after taking into account key explanatory variables. This line of enquiry would lead to the following type of question: can the gross differences in unemployment rates between say, Pakistani men and their white counterparts be explained by differences in their educational qualifications?

It is important to remember that an ethnic minority group may appear to be doing as well as, or even better than, whites when one looks at the gross differences, but not as well as might be expected given key characteristics such as educational qualifications. For example, black Africans appear to be doing quite well, but when one observes that they are a highly-educated group it becomes apparent that, on average, they are not doing nearly as well as equally well-educated whites.

Net differences in achievement are often referred to as 'ethnic

penalties.' Some analysts and commentators have played on this particular term to emphasise the importance of discrimination in explaining persisting net differences in labour market achievement. Meanwhile, others use it to refer to "all the sources of disadvantage that might lead an ethnic group to fare less well in the labour market than do similarly qualified whites."[5] Either way, discrimination provides an important, but partial, explanation.

In comparing the gross and net differences, the evidence shows four things. First, ethnic minorities remain disadvantaged in terms of employment and occupational attainment.[6] In fact, when key factors that are usually linked with labour market achievement are taken into account, some groups become more disadvantaged. For instance, the propensity of all groups of Asian men to be unemployed is *higher* in gross than net terms. Secondly, all ethnic minority men were shown to have a persisting disadvantage in earning power. For instance, Pakistani and Bangladeshi men earn £169 per week less than their white counterparts with similar educational and other backgrounds; among Indian men this shortfall shrinks to £23 per week but persists as a deficit nevertheless.[7] UK-born ethnic minority women appear to be no longer disadvantaged in terms of earnings, though it should be noted that their foreign-born peers continue to be disadvantaged. Thirdly, Indian men were consistently the least disadvantaged among ethnic minority groups. This can be seen in terms of unemployment and earnings, as already shown, as well as in terms of employment progression (where they had two-thirds the likelihood of occupying professional posts compared with a one-third and one-half chance among blacks and non-Indian Asians respectively). Finally, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and black men and women were consistently among the worst off across all three labour market indicators. For instance, black Caribbean men earned £81 per week less in net terms than white men, rising to £132 per week among black African men. For non-Indian, ethnic minority women, the incidence of unemployment was typically between two and three times greater in net terms than among white women.

From a policy perspective net differences are at least as important as gross differences. The question of whether public policy does and should address the problem of gross or net labour market differences is inevitably problematic. Indeed, the real experience of large gross differences in earnings, for example, is such that there are significant consequences for the economic position of particularly poorly performing groups. Equally, it is also true that human capital factors such as education are directly relevant and that these do clearly impact on the outcomes seen among various ethnic groups in terms of employment rates, earnings and so on.

Ethnic minorities and labour markets: the evidence base
Turning to the evidence base proper, a number of key messages are clear on the scale and dimensions of the policy problem as well as the underlying causes of this picture. First, around half the projected growth in the labour force during the next decade will be among ethnic minorities. There are pretty straightforward demographic reasons for this bulge effect, and they mean that pressure will mount for employers to look more critically at sources of recruitment into the workforce.

Second, disaggregation of the overall picture reveals that there are vast disparities in the labour market achievements of different minority groups. For instance, around one in twenty males of Indian origin are employed as doctors or in professions allied to medicine. Significantly, the contrast could not be starker when looking at men of Pakistani origin: one in eight work as taxi drivers. Equally, there are stark disaggregations linked not only to generation but also to gender and geography.

Thirdly, before applicants even get to the jobs market, there are some interesting patterns at play in education and training. For instance, almost all minority groups exhibit higher staying on rates in full-time education than their white counterparts. This is often linked to some very strong human capital assets that frequently are not rewarded fully by employers. Hence, it is not hard to see the phenomenon of the IT

expert waiting tables at the local curry house which journalists and others often highlight. Linked to this is the recurring story in the evidence base showing that minorities have poorer returns to education in the labour market than their white counterparts. It is more than likely that discrimination in and around the labour market is a factor, and arguably an important one; but, equally crucial, are the other circumstantial, i.e. non-discrimination, factors at play, such as the poor educational attainment rates found among certain groups and a pattern of limited access to strong employment networks. This is where social capital of the right kind – bridging rather than bonding[8] – is important in understanding why labour market achievements are so poor for ethnic minorities including those that are human capital-rich.

Thirdly, on progression, recent Labour Force Survey data reveals that Indian and Chinese men now are more likely than whites to hold jobs at professional or managerial levels. This again marks dramatic progress but, again, arguably less than the rates commensurate with their education attainment levels. This is a potentially powerful fact since it nails the myth that discrimination is exaggerated and cannot apply to those groups that are notionally 'successful' in the labour market. The evidence refutes this by suggesting that it may be playing a part in holding people back in jobs despite the fact that they are 'making it' and progressing. In short, certain minorities are undoubtedly doing well but not well enough.

Fourthly, the report also identifies problems and deficiencies in human capital – attainment through compulsory education, skills gaps and language barriers. The overall message is that causal drivers go beyond discrimination. Similarly, the powerful effect of geography means that ethnic minorities are commonly located in deprived, economically weak areas. This results in a number of employment barriers accruing from limited residential mobility, transportation difficulties, and a general failure of regeneration policy to turn around long-term industrial decline in many of the densest areas of minority settlement.

Closing remarks

This chapter has looked at the broad-brush changes that have resulted in British society as a result of mass immigration in the post-war period and highlighted the labour market-related challenges that these changes have amounted to. The historic challenge of integration has frequently meant that policy debates have arisen on the question of multicultural thinking and contested notions of belonging and identity. Of course hard, objective evidence regarding levels of integration into the labour market have received rather less attention in policy terms. The sources of long-term economic integration for black and Asian ethnic minorities are, at least in part, not the same as those for their white counterparts, even though the evidence base also shows the many areas in which common sources of poor achievements span the racial divide.

This represents, in sum, a nuanced picture of the scale, nature and causes of poor labour market achievements. It relies on an understanding of the effects of circumstantial factors such as education and skills on the one hand and, on the other, the debilitating consequences of discrimination in and beyond the labour market. The policy implications in turn will require bringing together a package of measures that respond to the full range of underlying causes.

Shamit Saggar is a Senior Policy Advisor in the Strategy Unit at the Cabinet Office, on secondment from Queen Mary, University of London

*The author is writing in a personal capacity

[1] Castles, S., Booth, H., and Wallace, T., '*Here for Good: Western Europe's New Ethnic Minorities'*, (Pluto Press: 1984).

[2] The first CIAC report was published in July 1963 and dealt with housing issues (Cmnd. 2119, *First Report by the Commonwealth Immigrants Advisory Council*, London, 1963); the second was published in February 1964 on education themes including English language provision (Cmnd. 2266, *Second report by the Commonwealth Immigrants Advisory Council*, London, 1964); the third and final report appeared in September 1964 and was concerned with the problem of immigrant school-leavers and their employment prospects (Cmnd. 2458, *Third Report by the Commonwealth Advisory Council*, London, 1965).

3   A fuller discussion of the early challenges of integration of ethnic minority groups is found in E.J.B. Rose *et. al*., '*Colour and Citizenship: A Report on British Race Relations',* (Oxford University Press/ Institute of Race Relations: 1969).

4   Shamit Saggar, 'Integration and Adjustment: Britain's Liberal Settlement Revisited', in D. Lowe (ed), *Immigration and Integration: Australia and Britain,* (Canberra and London: Bureau of Immigration, Multi-cultural and Population Research, Australia/Sir Robert Menzies Centre for Australian Studies, 1995), pp.105-31.

5   Heath, A., and McMahon, D., 'Education and Occupational Attainments: The Impact of Ethnic Origins', in V. Karn (ed), *Ethnicity in the 1991 Census, vol. 4: Education, Employment and Housing* (HMSO: 1997), p.91.

6   All figures for unemployment are based on Carmichael, F., and Woods, R., 'Ethnic Penalties in Unemployment and Occupational Attainment Evidence for Britain', *International Review of Applied Economics*, 14: 71-98, 2000 (based on 1994 LFS).

7   All figures for male earnings are based on Berthoud, R., 'Ethnic Employment Penalties in Britain', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 26: 389-416, 2000.

8   Bonding social capital refers to support and guidance networks that are found within membership boundaries of a particular ethno-cultural or ethno-religious group. Bridging social capital, by contrast, refers to comparable networks than span across distinctive groups and in particular link to wider white-dominated society and institutions.

11 Why Do We Hate Refugees? Public Opinion, Citizenship and Integration

Phoebe Griffith and Sacha Chan-Kam

Public perceptions of refugees have never been worse. After gypsies and travellers, refugees are today the least popular group in our society and half of Britons think that Britain should "not take any more asylum seekers." Despite the incredulous responses to recent events in Europe (it could never happen here!), an EU-wide survey commissioned by the EU Monitoring Centre classified the UK as a "passively tolerant" country which, together with Greece, displays an exceptionally low tolerance threshold for asylum seekers.[1] In other words, Britain is today one of the most refugee-phobic countries in the EU.

A hardening of public perceptions is clearly dangerous because as demands for tougher policies such as repatriation grow, our humanitarian responsibilities are put at stake. But negative attitudes towards refugees put the immigration system more broadly at stake. Asylum and migration have become synonymous in the public's mind and this is problematic when predictions show that immigration of all kinds is set to grow and needs to grow in the UK. Government research shows that over the next decade net migration will account for 70% of the overall population change. According to UN statistics, we will need to allow 83,000 workers in a year just to keep the working population at a constant. As our population ages and certain sectors of the economy face greater skill shortages, opening people's minds towards asylum seekers and refugees in the long-term could determine whether or not we can achieve our economic objectives.

Some efforts are being made. Despite the furore that followed, the

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recent immigration White Paper opened a space for a more fruitful debate about the integration of newcomers to the UK. It began to address issues of belonging through the promotion of citizenship and the creation of an integration framework based on rights and responsibilities. However, current policies are restricted for two reasons. First of all, the balance continues to be tipped in favour of deterrence and energies are focused overwhelmingly on keeping people out. While the government is right to assert that public support for the immigration system will only be maintained if it succeeds in designing a well-administered asylum system, current trends show that toughening-up alone does very little to shift public perceptions. Secondly, the frameworks put forward over-emphasise the responsibilities of refugees to adapt and fail to recognise the responsibilities of their hosts – the government as well as the broader population – to deliver services that will allow them to integrate. The fixation with building more streamlined processing systems does very little for the estimated 50% of asylum applicants who are granted leave to remain.[2]

Based on the experiences of other industrialised countries, this chapter sets out a two-step approach to reversing the hardening trend of attitudes towards refugees in the UK. Firstly, it suggests ways of changing the discourse surrounding asylum by tackling the cloud of misinformation which surrounds refugees today. While myth-busting and awareness-raising play a key role, the promotion of community involvement and the tackling of barriers through participation are also effective vehicles to tackling the gap between refugees and host communities. Secondly, it sets out an agenda for an integration package for refugees who settle in the UK, concentrating on three key and inter-connected areas – information, language tuition and access to employment.

Public opinion, segregation and misinformation

The success or failure of our immigration system is today judged almost entirely on the results of policies put in place to deter immigration – how well we can police our borders or how fast we can return people to their countries of origin. As a result, ever greater amounts of resources are today being channelled into an expanding bureaucracy in charge of processing and deterring asylum applications, and towards the sophisticated security measures that go with it. £1.05billion was spent in 2001 and it is estimated that this figure will grow in 2002.

But far from reassuring people and encouraging greater openness, the government's efforts to demonstrate that the system is well-managed are currently backfiring. Public opinion seems to be hardening at the same rate that government boosts its spending on controlling immigration and the public seems oblivious to the news of evidence that the reforms being introduced have delivered concrete results.[3] According to MORI, for example, immigration and race relations is for the first time second on the list of most important issues facing Britain today – below the health system but above key issues such as crime, education and transport.[4]

While they did not take place within refugee communities, the drivers for the riots of last summer in Oldham, Bradford and Burnley may hold many lessons when it comes to refocusing the debate about refugees. Firstly, they were a clear reminder of the repercussions which the failure to integrate newcomers can have in the long-term. More importantly, they reflected the key role played by interaction and understanding between groups in promoting social cohesion. All the reports which followed highlighted how growing racial tensions in the lead up to these violent outbursts were driven primarily by a sense of growing and intractable alienation felt among different groups. In the words of John Denham's report: "… in many areas affected by disorder or community tensions, there is little interchange between members of different racial, cultural and religious communities."[5] The key to easing tensions, these reports point out, was the improvement of different communities' knowledge of each other through information and interaction.

The policies currently adopted to fast-track the process for asylum seekers and to ensure that we facilitate the removal of failed applicants have helped not to address, but to increase the isolation of asylum seekers and refugees, stymieing interaction. In the initial stages, for example, asylum seekers are assigned to accommodation centres in rural areas, they are allocated an Application Registration Card which sets them aside from the rest of the community and through language-based dispersal are made to relocate en masse to parts of the country which, more often than not, are already subject to serious social tensions. While there is a logic to these steps when it comes to managing the process, in practice these policies help reinforce the isolation of refugees and therefore fuel fear and misinformation in the host community.

And, as is well known, prejudice of all kinds is driven by ignorance. Polls reveal the extent to which the debate about asylum and refugees is based on a deep level of misinformation. For example, in a recent poll, when asked what percentage of the world's refugees are in the UK respondents estimated 23%. The figure is only 1.9%.[6]

The main problem is that the public's understanding of refugees is moulded by the cumulative effect of an overwhelmingly negative media debate which presents very little positive information about refugees. A recent study of stories in 161 local newspapers, for example, found that only 6% cited positive contributions by asylum seekers and refugees.[7] Studies by Oxfam have found that the press perpetuates a whole series of myths through unbalanced reporting, including perceptions of Britain as being a 'soft touch' and the misinformed blurring of distinctions between 'asylum', 'economic migration' and 'illegal migration' – all of which are used more or less interchangeably in the media.[8] Little is said about why refugees come to Britain or the extent to which we are in fact part of a global phenomenon which affects developed and developing countries alike. How many people know, for example, that Pakistan and Iran are the two main receivers of refugees in the world?[9]

Ongoing research by Liverpool University has shown that people's stance on asylum is heavily influenced by the information with which they are presented. By showing that a majority (57.9%) of all demands regarding asylum are directed to government actors, the study draws the conclusion that "the strong anti-migrant/immigration perspective is thus more an outcome of state management and control of the issue than a reaction to a mobilised xenophobic public".[10] The Government therefore needs to recognise that it plays a key role in shaping public perceptions. Instead of cushioning all aspects of the immigration system in dry and at times openly hostile terms, it needs to assume a proactive role in shaping the debate.[11] In the first instance, it needs to address the blurring of definitions clarifying that asylum seekers are not immigrants but stateless people who are covered by international law. Talk of 'illegal asylum seekers' is illogical and debates about asylum needs to be framed as a human rights issue linked to our global responsibilities. Government should also be active in easing people's fears about 'swamping' and 'flooding.' The first step is to show the public that, despite recent media scares about Cambridge-sized cities appearing in the UK every year, asylum seekers today account for a mere 0.15% of the population.[12] The government can reassure people that, far from 'swamping' us, this is a group that can be engaged in an efficient, humane and productive manner.

Countries such as Canada have already been thinking through these challenges and are putting policies in place to tackle misinformation and prejudice. These range from straightforward awareness raising initiatives – festivals, media briefings and ceremonies – to more ingenious ways of involving communities in an effort to shift prejudice and make people learn about the realities of asylum. The Host Programme in Canada, for example, matches new arrivals with Canadian individuals or groups who help welcome people, give guidance and offer support. While 'buddies' can provide language practice, help establish contacts with potential employers and introduce new arrivals to aspects of Canadian life, the idea is that the host's attitudes will also be changed by the experience. By establishing a relationship with a refugee and learning about the real drivers behind

asylum, the service also helps counter-act the perception of refugees as 'scroungers.'

A similar concept applies to the Canadian Private Sponsorship Scheme in which community groups and individuals provide basic assistance to refugees. Eleven per cent of refugees are privately sponsored in Canada. Sponsoring groups – families, local communities, churches – put forward the funds for providing sponsored refugees with accommodation, clothing, food and settlement assistance for up to twelve months or until the sponsored refugees become self-sufficient. To qualify to sponsor refugees a group of five or more sponsors sign a formal agreement with the government. Again, groups are both able to interact with refugees and made to feel that the refugees well-being is in their interest as part of a genuine effort to bridge the 'misinformation' gap.[13]

A refugee integration plan for the UK

Although the recent White Paper sketched out the parameters of a basic integration plan for refugees, the government needs to start thinking far more systematically about the frameworks needed to help refugees in the transition to becoming members of our society and active contributors to our economy.[14]

The first challenge, however, will be to overcome the ideological barrier which currently exists in the UK. Much of the debate is still trapped in a fruitless conflict between those who favour 'assimilation' (the belief that it is the duty of newcomers to adapt to the values, culture and norms of the 'host society') and those multiculturalists (who advocate the need to protect the right to difference of ethnic and religious groups). Integration should be a way of allowing us to move beyond these poles to develop a unifying framework based on pragmatism and which aims to help refugees overcome the barriers they face both in society and in the labour market through targeted interventions. The aim should be to move beyond recriminations about 'linguistic and cultural imperialism' on the one hand and 'special treatment' on the other, in order to start concentrating on delivering effective services for those who remain in

the UK. Furthermore, this will allow us to move away from a debate that circumvents the fact that the desire to maintain their traditions and language alive does not preclude refugees' desire to find work, their need to learn English and an interest in our culture.

The second challenge is to find ways in which to deliver these services in a way that avoids accusations of 'special treatment'. In order to counteract prejudice we need to show people the extent to which refugees are not here to scrounge off the state but are skilled and often highly educated. The Refugee Council has argued, for example, that allowing asylum seekers to work could be a way of showing the public that they are not here to 'live' off the state but are keen to find employment. However, while shifting perceptions of 'scrounging', it is also important to demonstrate that in fact the people who are coming to the UK have potential and could be an indispensible source of much-needed skills in sectors of our economy which are facing shortages.

Structuring policies around certain rights and responsibilities is a useful way of overcoming the 'special treatment' trap. Beyond the introduction of oaths of allegiance and citizenship lessons, the White Paper offered very little in terms of active policies aimed to encourage empowerment, participation and a sense of belonging among refugees. But policies such as these can have a dual function. While increasing the stakes for refugees, they are also useful tools in terms of public opinion management – showing people that refugees are not relying on the state but are ready to make full use of services provided for them.

In Finland, a country which places the emphasis on the socio-economic adaptation of refugees, policies have looked for ways in which refugees can begin to play an active role in the integration process. As opposed to the British approach whereby the tie between refugees and the state is more or less severed once refugee status is awarded, in Finland refugees play an active role in developing their individual integration plans working in consultation with an expert government adviser. The plan is particularly constructive because it moves away from one-size-

fits-all definitions of integration and recognises that each new arrival will have different language abilities and qualifications, and will therefore need to be serviced in different ways. Whether qualified doctors or experienced builders, the scheme allows refugees to determine their own route through the integration process.

The final challenge is to rethink government spending. While using the language of integration, the policies put forward in the recent White Paper delivered very little in terms of co-ordinated integration plans and resources. For example, of the £1.4 billion allocated towards immigration by the Home Office, only £5million (less than 1%) will go towards integration schemes. The rest will be channelled towards administration and crackdown, including the creation of expensive detention centres and sophisticated dispersal mechanisms.

Experience from around the world shows us that well-funded services and guidance will be effective in speeding up the process of adaptation for refugees. Three key and related areas have yet to be tackled effectively in the UK: information, English language provision and access to employment.

More than ever before, refugees arriving into Britain are in need of **guidance and information**. Most of them come from countries which do not have close ties with the UK, such as Afghanistan or Iran, and will therefore know very little about UK society, the employment market and our lifestyle. While not advocating a 'How to be British' type approach which inculcates our 'norms of acceptability', information about how to find work and housing, how to deal with a landlord, how to access a school or college will make a crucial difference to refugees' everyday lives. Relevant government departments therefore need to create guides as well as specialist services which provide refugees with vital information such as how to enrol in language services or how to validate qualifications and skills.

English language provision for refugees in the UK is, to say the least,

inadequate. Up until very recently there was no English curriculum targeted at refugees[15] and services provided are still only tagged onto the normal services supplied by Further Education Colleges. More importantly, the amount of teaching hours catered is limited and erratic. Research shows that on average a non-English speaker will need 1765 hours of tuition to reach levels of competence required for further study or employment.[16] In the UK there is currently no specific language teaching allowance.

Australia is a leader in the field of English language provision for refugees. The AMEP scheme comes close to meeting these targets offering 510 language hours of English tuition a year (this is both a legal entitlement and compulsory). The scheme also emphasises the need to facilitate learning and supply tailor-made courses to suit refugee needs: child care is available for mothers, home study and distance-learning are provided for those who may find it difficult to attend daily sessions, and night classes cater for the needs of working refugees. The UK should match this commitment.

Linked to this are issues of **access to employment**. The most recent Home Office figures on refugee employment date back to 1995 demonstrating that the issue has not been given the priority it deserves. They show that a third of refugees in the UK have a degree, post-graduate or professional qualification and that 90% speak two languages. But Home Office research from the same year showed that an average of 70% of refugees are unemployed, despite the fact that two-thirds of them had jobs in their country of origin. The UK, in other words, is falling victim of a severe 'brain waste' whereby valuable skills are being lost. At the heart of this is the lack of a co-ordinated scheme to get refugees into work. Despite recent reforms, the paperwork continues to be complicated and refugees still rely on the inadequate SAL1 form, the UK's equivalent to a 'green card', which is sent to them only once. There is still no formal system for the recognition of skills and most are forced into under-employment. Bar a few innovative voluntary sector-led initiatives,[17] refugees currently have

no way of proving their qualifications. Anecdotal evidence shows that in fact many employers – both at the highly-skilled and unskilled end of the scale – who are facing recruitment problems are keen to employ refugees. However, few know how to reach them and many are wary due to the lack of clarity in terms of their legal status.

Experience from other countries shows that state interventions can be a very effective way of making the connection between job-seeking refugees and sectors of the economy which are facing labour shortages. Dutch authorities have taken a proactive stance creating targeted policies aimed at matching refugee job seekers with prospective employers in key sectors. Having set themselves an ambitious target – to halve the unemployment figure in two years – authorities established links with sectors of the economy that were facing the most severe skills shortages. The central aim was to engage employers on a contractual basis. Because targets were set, results were measurable. Unemployment rates came down from 16% to 10%, exceeding targets.

Getting refugees into work should be a priority for the UK government. Access to jobs will create a win-win situation whereby sectors in the economy facing recruitment problems, such as IT, nursing, teaching, health care and construction, have access to a new, untapped pool of skills which complements rather than competes with the domestic workforce. The government therefore needs to make the connections and build the networks which will facilitate this process. Once again, if schemes to get refugees into work are yielding results, they will have positive effects on softening public opinion.

Conclusion: Renewing the refugee and asylum debate

Softening public opinion towards refugees poses a difficult political challenge. However, if the government fails to look beyond the immediate issues – such as, tackling the backlog of applications or negotiating the fair dispersal of asylum seekers across the EU – it will continue to be caught up in an up-ward spiral of demands for tougher measures. The debate about refugees and asylum needs to be renewed.

The first step is clearly to ensure that public opinion is not being shaped by misinformation or exaggeration. The government can make clear statements about the fact that we are not being 'swamped' and that the people entering the UK can make a positive contribution.[18] But a more fundamental shift will be to change the focus away from the current obsession on deterrence towards a more fruitful debate about how targeted interventions can help refugees become active members of our society and participants in our economy.

Phoebe Griffith is a Researcher at The Foreign Policy Centre and Co-ordinator of the Global Britons Programme

Sacha Chan-Kam is a Senior Reintegration Assistant at the International Organisation for Immigration (IOM)

1 Survey commissioned by the EU Monitoring Centre. Eurobarometer, 2000.
2 Refugee Council estimate.
3 In a recent interview David Blunkett announced that in the last 2 years the backlog of cases had been brought down from 100,000 in January 2000 to 35,000 at the end of 2001.
4 MORI Delivery Index, May 2002.
5 'Building Cohesive Communities' Report of Ministerial Group on Public Order and Social Cohesion.
6 MORI Public Opinion Survey, May 2002.
7 Study commissioned by the Audit Commission / Refugee Council.
8 'Asylum: the truth behind the headlines', Oxfam 2001.
9 World Migration Report, 2000.
10 Andrew Geddes and Paul Statham, 'Examining British Asylum Politics: A Resilient Nation-State at the Border of 'Schengenland'', Paper for the panel 'The Political Uses and Abuses of Asylum: Deconstructing the Liberal Paradox', *International Studies Association*, New Orleans, March 24 – 27 2002.
11 For example, asylum seekers in detention centres are not to benefit from training or language classes but instead are treated to "purposeful activities" because if the immigrations services offered a positive service people would interpret this as "special treatment" and would act as a magnate for even larger numbers of asylum seekers.
12 www.migrationwatchuk.org
13 The government is currently exploring the possibility of introducing a mentoring scheme to the UK through the Employability Forum and TimeBank.
14 'Secure Borders, Safe Heaven', February 2002.
15 The National English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) curriculum was published in May 2002 and is aimed specifically at organisations and teachers offering English language provision to refugees and asylum seekers in the post-compulsory education sector.

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16 Philida Schellekens, 'English Language as a Barrier to Employment', Training and Education, DfEE 2001.

17 The Employability Forum for example is a body which aims to assist refugees in preparing for and obtaining employment. Its services aim to establish lies of communication to break down barriers and present positive images of newcomers in the workplace. The Home Office is currently exploring the possibility of carrying out skills audits at reception centres. British Medical Association Refugee Doctor database is another successful scheme of this kind.

18 An example of proactive myth-busting was the government's recent dismissal of the findings of a report that claimed, among other things, that we would be seeing 135,000 people entering the UK a year.

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